Tanong ng Bayan /A16

Singil sa kuryente, dapat bang taasan?

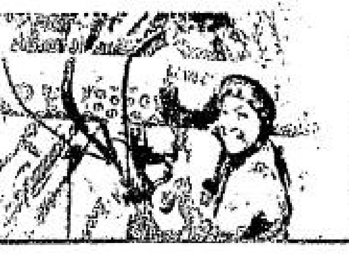
CELLCARD KADA ARAW,
CELLPHONE KADA LINGGO! Text 2910 now!

■ Across / A17

Vigilantes kill 5 in one day in Davao City

■ Lifestyle / D1

Closing Pacita Abad's circle of wanderlust



■ Business/ B1

Gov't lowers '05 deficit target to P177B

■ Entertainment / A40

'Denmark Idol' is a Filipino

Christian movement urges men to be wild at heart

LOS ANGELES—A growing movement calls on Christians to throw off their "nice guy" personas and emulate warriors. And movies like "Braveheart" and "Legends of the Fall" are on the movement's viewing list for Christian men.

The book which inspired the movement, John Eldredge's "Wild at Heart," has already

CHRISTIAN/ A5

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Reds target big loggers but continue 'tax' take

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI S. Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—A group that admits to collecting "revolutionary taxes" from big-time loggers now wants to go after them.

REDS/ A22

LAGOT DIN SILA SA AMIN!

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Monday, January 24, 2005 ★★ 68 pages / 4 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 47 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Mike to Jamby: Shut up

DEFENSOR: Senator does not have moral high ground.

DENR chief says Madrigals into logging

By Tonette Orejas and Russell Arador
PDI Central Luzon Desk
and Norman Bordadora

HITTING back at opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal, a critic of the government drive against illegal loggers, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said the Madrigals had operated timber concessions in landslide-hit Aurora and Quezon and that the senator herself owned two mining companies.

"[Madrigal] needs to explain how big was her family's logging concessions in Aurora and Quezon," Defensor told reporters in Tarlac City yesterday.

He revealed the Madrigals' holdings in logging and mining firms following the senator's accusation that the government's anti-illegal logging campaign had spared big-time timber poachers.

Madrigal urged Malacañang's Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force on Saturday to go beyond filing charges against town officials in Quezon and instead run after big-time loggers who allegedly mask their illegal operations with timber licenses and agreements.

"I hope she'll stop criticizing and instead help us in our campaign," Defensor said at a press briefing. "It's easy to criticize but these people have yet to contribute in the campaign one bit," he said.

Madrigal's media relations officer, Cory Flores, said the senator would answer Defensor's allegations in a privilege speech today.

Madrigal and Defensor are expected to face each other today at a Senate hearing on the

MIKE/ A22

MADRIGAL: Will answer charges in privilege speech today.

Administration needs allies for survival

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE FOURTH anniversary of the installation of President Macapagal-Arroyo on Jan. 21, 2001, through people power hardly created a ripple. It was, in fact, a nonevent over which not many were excited.

Since the world was electrified by the first "People Power Revolution" in the Philippines in February 1986, the passage last week of Edsa II Day was marked by the lowest level of public enthusiasm.

With another Edsa memorial approaching next month, the 19th anniversary of Edsa I, the event is unlikely to generate the ecstatic enthusiasm it had created during the past two decades.

The event has ceased to be a mobilizing element in Philippine politics, either to depose an unpopular political leadership or to launch programs of political and social reforms.

Last week, Ms Arroyo toned down the rhetoric of Edsa II by calling on the media to discourage "extra-constitutional means" to change the government.

The message indicated that the President had come around to the view that un-

ADMINISTRATION/ A21

FESTIVAL FLURRY
Members of the Tribu Bola-Bola show off their dancing prowess as they defend their title during the Dinagyang Festival's street performances in Iloilo City yesterday.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Army officer sacked for order to kill Abra mayor

By Christian V. Esguerra
and Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

AN ARMY colonel has been sacked for allegedly ordering two soldiers to assassinate an Abra town mayor supposedly at the behest of the provincial governor, a political rival of the mayor.

The two soldiers said they were offered P300,000 each to kill Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna and her family but they refused.

An Army statement yesterday said Lt. Col. Noel Mislang, commanding officer of the 41st Infantry Battalion based in Lagangilang town, had been stripped of his command for giving "an illegal order" and placed under restriction pending an investigation.

It said Mislang had ordered the two soldiers "to liquidate the mayor which the duo did not carry out."

Mislang told the INQUIRER he would answer the accusations against him at the proper time.

Abra Gov. Vicente Valera dismissed as a pure fabrication the allegation linking him to the supposed plot against Luna.

The two soldiers who made the allegation in separate affidavits last month were identified in the Army statement as Corporals Antonio Rosqueta and Eduardo Barcelona.

Only Barcelona is still alive.

On Dec. 22, five days after exe-

ARMY/ A6

New US spy arm trains sights on Philippines

WASHINGTON—The US defense department has created a new espionage arm that will focus on foreign countries and an early planning document cited the Philippines as being one of them, the Washington Post reported on Sunday.

The creation of the new group, which has operated in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other undisclosed locations, would reinterpret US law to give Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wide authority over spy operations abroad, the Post said.

Citing Pentagon documents and interviews with participants, the Post said Rumsfeld created the organization—called the Strategic Support Branch—to end "near total dependence" on the Central Intelligence Agency for human intelligence.

An early planning memorandum to Rumsfeld from the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, said the focus of the initiative was on "emerging target countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, the Philippines and Georgia," according to the Post.

The Pentagon has denied the report.

Defense department spokesperson Lawrence DiRita said in a statement: "There is no unit that is directly reportable to the secretary of defense for clandestine operations as is described in the Washington Post article..."

"Further, the department is not attempting to 'bend' statutes to fit

NEW US/ A8

THE Do-24ATT and its crew of a German pilot and four Filipinos and their guests take a break in the waters off Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, during a stopover in their world tour.

Historic amphibian plane flies for RP kids, tourism

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—At least 18 countries and 29 destinations. That's how many places a German pilot and his team of four Filipinos have visited in the first half of their world tour promoting Philippine tourism.

The flight, made on board a historical amphibian plane restored by South East Asian Airlines (Seair), took off to celebrate the aviation industry's centennial and to raise funds for Filipino children.

Since leaving this former American base in Pampanga in April last year, the team—in between stops—managed to raise P3.5 million, which Seair donated to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

Dr. Nicholas Alipui, Unicef country representative, said the initial proceeds of the tour would "make a difference in the lives of thousands of children in the Philippines whose schools will receive 100-book libraries, educational toys, well-trained teachers, and even toilets and clean water."

The team members—German Capt. Iren Dornier, Seair co-founder, Capt. Joseph Bustamante, Ferdinand Yco, Paulo Salalila and Lovenia Burcer—returned here recently to spend time with their families and gear up for the last leg of the "Kayang-Kaya [We can do it]: Historic Flight for Dreams."

They were joined by Capt. Nikos Gitsis, Seair director.

"The tour was originally scheduled to end in December 2004, but Seair decided to extend the trip in order to visit more destinations and generate more funds for Unicef," Dornier said.

The flight was made possible by a restored Do-24ATT aircraft designed and built in the 1930s by Dornier's grandfather, the German aircraft pioneer Claudius Dornier. The aircraft is now in Rochester, New York, being readied

HISTORIC/ A6

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming widespread over eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/24/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

INITIAL PNP FINDINGS

Kalibo cop was 'delusional'

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE POLICEMAN behind the bloody Kalibo Ati-atihan festival shooting was suffering from "persecution delusion," initial findings by the Philippine National Police showed.

Director Arturo Lomibao, Task Force Kalibo chief, said that should explain why PO1 Jonathan Moreño specifically killed fellow policemen, including his superiors, during the Jan. 16 rampage that saw eight people die and 31 others wounded.

"He felt he was being persecuted, that's why he was particularly aiming at policemen," Lomibao told reporters, noting that all the police casualties suffered gunshot wounds from the waist up. "He was shooting every cop in his path."

In contrast, most of the civilian casualties were hit by stray bullets in their extremities, the official said.

Quoting chief PNP psychiatrist Supt. Marjorie Comandao, Lomibao said that Moreño apparently had an "emotional breakdown," which explained his behavior during the rampage.

"It's obvious that the behavior was abnormal, that he was not in the right frame of mind," he said.

Police investigators and psychiatrists are looking into two factors that could have driven the policeman to go berserk.

First was Moreño's purported disappointment over the fact that he did not get promoted even if he was part of the team that arrested Boy Cuadra, allegedly the top drug lord in the Visayas.

Lomibao said investigators learned of Moreño's gripe after interviewing his family and friends.

Moreño, he said, was not promoted because he lacked civil service eligibility.

A special promotion could not apply to him in connection with the Cuadra arrest since there was no "risk of life" factor involved in that operation, Lomibao said.

Another reason being explored by probers that could have driven Moreño to snap were the threats he'd been reportedly getting from Cuadra's camp, the official said.

"He was reportedly receiving death threats to force him to abandon the case; but he always refused," Lomibao said.

Two officers—SPO3 Fidel Velasco and PO3 James Emmanuel Laguna—are being investigated for allegedly trying to bribe Moreño into withdrawing from the case, according to Lomibao.

Velasco was with Moreño when the police arrested Cuadra in 2001, he said.

To avoid a repeat of the rampage, police have begun "stress management debriefing and counseling" for Kalibo's 30 policemen.

Some 70 of Aklan's provincial police force of 503 officers are scheduled to undergo neuro-psychiatric tests based on the recommendation of their superiors, Lomibao said.

"These are the officers with attitudinal problems, like those guilty of chronic absenteeism," he said. "But it doesn't mean that they have mental problems."

Double-time, Senate vows budget by February

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE SENATE will work double time this week in order to have the proposed P907.6 billion budget for 2005 approved by Feb. 4.

Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said senators would pursue their earlier agreement in a caucus last week to put the 2005 proposed budget on the floor by Wednesday with Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. expected to sponsor the finance committee's report on the budget.

To meet the Feb. 4 deadline, the Senate will hold morning and afternoon sessions starting on Wednesday as well as sessions on Thursdays and Fridays.

The government is presently working under a reenacted budget, the second time this happened under the Arroyo administration.

The nine-member Senate minority, meanwhile, was busy preparing for the budget deliberations and had assigned certain members to scrutinize the budgets of various departments and agencies.

These include the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Interior and Local Government, and the Philippine National Police.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the minority would focus on "ferreting out hidden pork barrel" funds in the departments, among other things.

"We will also ask how the intelligence funds have been used in relation to present appropriation," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

The minority was also interested in the National Power Corp., which only last week came under fire from Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago who claimed that the state-owned power firm had debts amounting to P1.3 trillion.

"(Their expenditure) reportedly is more than half of the deficit and foreign debt," Pimentel said.

Santiago had questioned Napocor's P1.3-trillion debt, the bulk of which came from government guarantees to independent power producers during the power crisis in the '90s.

The feisty senator had threatened to slash the budget of the Department of Energy, which supervises Napocor, for what she claimed were continued anomalies plaguing the firm and other state energy corporations.

Even Sen. Ralph Recto agreed on the need for senators to focus on subsidy-dependent government corporations "whose losses sap public resources."

Recto said Napocor led the list of "projected losers in 2005" with a forecasted net loss of P83.62 billion.

But he said that Napocor may end up closing the year with a lower net loss "depending on its ability to wangle rate increases from the Energy Regulatory Commission."

Recto said Napocor was among 25 government-owned corporations and companies that the Department of Budget and Management projected would post a combined net loss of P102.7 billion this year.

Poe a 'good choice' but honor 'too late'

THE INQUIRER's naming of the late movie idol and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. as the Filipino of the Year 2004 was a "good choice," opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday, but the honor came "too late."

Pimentel conceded that the INQUIRER's choice of Poe came as a surprise to him.

Speaking candidly in a phone interview, the Senate minority leader couldn't help but note that the newspaper had "not [been] that kind" to Poe, popularly known by his initials FPJ, during the election campaign and the subsequent canvassing of votes in Congress last year.

But, "it's better late than never," he said.

Poe, who lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo but insisted that he had been cheated, died on Dec. 14, 2004, after suffering a massive stroke.

The INQUIRER picked Poe as the Filipino of the Year 2004 for having made the most impact on the news that year.

Family, friends and supporters marked the 40th day after his death last Saturday.

Christine O. Avendaño

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2nd to 61st Placers - Outlay of ₱171,000 for each of the sixty (60) scholars to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous school fees throughout the course in any of the four- or five-year programs requiring board exams offered at the TIP ....₱10,260,000.00

Total ....₱10,531,000.00

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1st Placer - Outlay of ₱60,000.00 to cover forty (40) monthly stipends of ₱1,500.00 per month through four (4) school years for board and lodging, books, transportation and other basic miscellaneous expenses, plus an outlay of ₱125,400.00 to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous fees throughout the Accountancy program at TIP Manila........₱185,400.00

2nd to 51st Placers - Outlay of ₱125,400.00 for each of the fifty (50) scholars to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous school fees throughout the Accountancy program at TIP Manila ....₱6,270,000.00

52nd to 131st Placers - Outlay of ₱13,630.00 for each of the eighty (80) scholars to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous school fees for one (1) semester in the Accountancy program at TIP Manila ....₱1,090,400.00

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1st Placer - Outlay of ₱50,000.00 to cover fifty (50) monthly stipends of ₱1,000.00 per month through five (5) school years, plus an outlay of ₱171,000.00 to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous fees throughout the Architecture program or in any four- or five-year Engineering program requiring board examinations offered at the TIP ....₱221,000.00

2nd to 41st Placers - Outlay of ₱171,000.00 for each of the forty (40) scholars to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous school fees throughout the Architecture program or in any four- or five-year Engineering program requiring board examinations offered at the TIP ....₱6,840,000.00

42nd to 101st Placers - Outlay of ₱13,500.00 for each of the sixty (60) scholars to cover tuition and other basic miscellaneous school fees for one (1) semester in Architecture or in any four- or five-year Engineering program requiring board examinations offered at the TIP ....₱810,000.00

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■ Pres. Elpidio Quirino Friday, March 4, 2005
■ Gov. Demetrio Quirino, Sr. Friday, March 11, 2005
■ Sec. Guillermo De Vega Friday, March 18, 2005

SCHEDULE OF EXAMINATIONS:
■ Pres. Elpidio Quirino Saturday, March 5, 2005
■ Gov. Demetrio Quirino, Sr. Saturday, March 12, 2005
■ Sec. Guillermo De Vega Saturday, March 19, 2005

■ TIME AND PLACE OF EXAMINATIONS:
9:00-11:00 AM, TIP MANILA AND TIP QUEZON CITY

OTHER ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIPS AND DISCOUNTS

	CATEGORY	GRANTS	PERIOD COVERED
1.	HONOR STUDENTS		
1.1	Valedictorian	Free Tuition and Basic Miscellaneous Fees	2 Semesters
		₱1,000.00 Stipend per Semester	2 Semesters
1.2	Salutatorian	Free Tuition and Basic Miscellaneous Fees	2 Semesters
		₱1,000.00 Stipend per Semester	1 Semester
1.3	3rd-10th Ranking High School Graduate	Free Tuition and Basic Miscellaneous Fees	1 Semester
2.	OTHER DISCOUNTS BASED ON GENERAL AVERAGE IN 4TH YEAR HIGH SCHOOL OR FINAL GRADE IN MATH IV, ENGLISH IV, OR SCIENCE IV		
2.1	90% or above	Free Tuition and Basic Miscellaneous Fees	1 Semester
2.2	85% - 89%	Free Tuition Fee	1 Semester
2.3	83% - 84%	80% Discount on Tuition Fee	1 Semester
2.4	81% - 82%	60% Discount on Tuition Fee	1 Semester
2.5	80%	50% Discount on Tuition Fee	1 Semester

'NICE COSTUME'
President Macapagal-Arroyo meets participants in the Dinagyang festival in Iloilo City yesterday. The President attended Mass and then took part in the festivities honoring the Sto. Niño. EDWIN BACASMAS

Japan won't budge on policy

By TJ Burgonio

THE JAPANESE government has rejected anew requests for a moratorium on the implementation of its new immigration policy which would drastically cut the number of Filipino entertainers entering Japan starting this year.

Shuhei Ogawa, spokesperson of the Japanese Embassy in Manila, said immigration authorities in his country were just waiting for the implementing rules to be drafted before enforcing the policy.

"It could be this month or next month. Or I think it should be down by March," he said in an interview.

Under Japan's tougher immigration policy, foreign entertainers intending to work there must undergo a two-year training in music or dance at a foreign educational institution, or have two years experience outside Japan, as a requirement for the issuance of a visa.

Once in place, the measure is expected to drastically cut the number of visas issued to aspiring entertainers every year from 80,000 to 8,000, and cut off a major source of foreign exchange remittances for Filipinos.

Over 100,000 Filipinos are presently working as entertainers in Japan.

Previously, Japan only required entertainers to present a government certification of their skills as singers or dancers. This was scrapped by the new policy.

Ogawa wondered why Filipinos would find it hard to comply with either a two-year training or two years experience in music or dance, noting that entertainers had complied with them in the past.

These two requirements had been imposed on Filipino entertainers until Tokyo allowed Manila to issue certifications of its entertainers' skills in the form of artist record books (ARB) in 1994, he said.

Japanese Embassy officials said the goal of the new policy was "to save" more Filipino women from falling into prostitution or ending up as "hostesses" in Japan's red light districts.

"I could say that more than 90 percent [of the Filipino women] are forced to become hostesses in the nightclubs or in the bars. That's the reality. Nobody can deny that fact," Ogawa said.

Japan's more stringent immigration policy reportedly stemmed from its inclusion by the US State Department in the watchlist of human traffickers last year.

The new policy intends to address the human trafficking problem.

Asked why Japan decided to amend its immigration policy only now, Ogawa said: "Based on our investigation, the situation is very terrible."

"If you know the actual situation, we will sacrifice those girls for another two or three years if we have a moratorium. I really want to ask the Filipinos: 'Hey, do you want to sacrifice those Filipinos for your own benefit?'" Ogawa said.

"We are talking about how to save these girls. Why do we have to wait?"

Once the policy is implemented, the Japanese government will be taking a more direct hand in screening the legitimate artists according to its own rules.

Solon pushes FVR for UN secretary general

AN ADMINISTRATION congressman has called for the nomination of former President Fidel V. Ramos to be the next secretary general of the United Nations.

Rep. Constantino Jaraula (Lakas, Cagayan de Oro City) has filed House Resolution No. 532 recommending Ramos as the replacement for current UN Secretary Kofi Annan who is set to step down next year.

Jaraula noted that it was an Asian candidate's turn to occupy the post and Ramos was "more than qualified for the position."

Jaraula said Ramos had "gained international popularity and acceptability for his continuing dedication to world peace and solidarity."

The late Gen. Carlos P. Romulo was the last Filipino to occupy a top seat at the UN when he served as president of the General Assembly in the late '40s.

"It will do great honor to the republic and it will do great service to the international community of nations if former President Ramos was ultimately chosen as secretary general of the UN," Jaraula said.

In his resolution, Jaraula urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to direct Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Lauro Baja, to take the steps necessary to ensure Ramos' candidacy.

In a brief interview, however, Jaraula said he had not talked to Ramos about his proposal. *Carlito Pablo*

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Arsenio Bello
Sidewalk Vendor
Fortunata B. Tadeo
Housewife
Ma. Mitos Pilar O. Pueo
College Student

Na sana mawala na ang mga hadlang sa mga panukalang batas na magbibigay sa pamahalaan ng dagdag na pondo sa ating pambansang pangangailangan".

Marami pang dapat gawin at ipatupad ang pamahalaan upang tayo'y makaahon na sa ating kalagayan. At dito, batid namin na dapat magkaroon ang gobyerno ng malaking pondo para sa pampublikong kalusugan at edukasyon, sa pagpapagawa ng mga kalsada at tulay, sa pagpapailaw sa lahat ng bahagi ng bansa, sa pagkakaroon ng malinis na tubig sa bawat tahanan at para sa marami pang mga proyekto ng gobyerno. Kaya sana, magkaisa na ang ating mga pinuno upang mapasa na sa lalong madaling panahon ang mga nakabinbin na panukalang batas na magbibigay ng karagdagang pondo na kailangan nating lahat.

Malaking tulong ang pagkakapasa na ng Excise Tax on Alchohol and Tobacco Products at ng Lateral Attrition Bill. Sa ngayon, mahalaga na maisabatas na ang pagtaas ng Value Added Tax mula 10% hanggang 12%. Ang masusing pagaaral ng panukalang batas tungkol dito ay magpapatunay hindi ito kontra-mahirap ayon sa paniwala ng iilan.

Hindi sakop ng VAT ang presyo ng gulay, isda, karne at iba pang mga pagkain at mga pangunahing bilihin. Kaya't hindi masasabing ang dagdag na buwis ay nakaumang sa mga mahihirap. Bagkus, maraming bagay na gamit at konsumo ng mahihirap ay hindi mapapatawan ng karagdagang buwis.

Subalit ang pinakamahalagang dahilan sa pagpasa ng VAT bill ay ang malaking pondo na maidadagdag nito sa kabang-bayan upang maipatupad na ang maraming proyekto ng gobyerno tungo sa ating kaunlaran.

Sa panig nating mga mamamayan, makakatulong tayo sa pamamagitan ng mga sumusunod na paraan:

- Labanan ang pagnanakaw sa kabang-bayan
- Agad magbayad ng tamang buwis
- Humingi ng opisyal na resibo sa ating mga binibili

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Christian movement urges men to be wild ...

From page A1

sold 1.5 million copies in English and been translated into 16 languages, most recently Korean.

Eldredge believes many Christian men have become bored ("really nice guys") and invites them to rediscover passion by viewing their life's mission as having a battle to fight, an adventure to live and a beauty to rescue.

"The modern era has brought up immense conveniences but at what price. The human heart is desperate for something more than a quicker serving of popcorn," Eldredge says in a recent interview.

Eldredge calls on men to be prepared to take risks and rediscover their dreams but does not provide a specific route to find, for example, an adventure to live. Career, marriage and family become heroic quests rather than chains which bind.

He focuses on how men can become less passive and "engage" those around them, particularly their wives and children.

"The guy who sits in front of the television is unengaged. That man is a bad man. They [children] need engagement whether it is playing on the floor with your 1-year-old or tougher games when they are 15 [years old]," he says.

Eldredge says he has been astounded by the response to his book with momentum gathering steadily since the book was published in 2001 by Christian publisher Thomas Nelson.

Men have been flocking to retreats and forming small groups to study it. Some are organized by Eldredge and his team, but many are just informally arranged by readers of the book.

"It has become something of a grass-roots wildfire," Eldredge says.

Braveheart sword

Jim Chase, an advertising copywriter from La Crescenta, California, has had a replica of the sword actor Mel Gibson used when he played legendary Scottish warrior William Wallace in "Braveheart" hanging above his desk since attending a Wild at Heart retreat with 350 other men last year.

"It is just a reminder that we are in a battle every day. It can be just facing boredom and routine, but it is a battle," Chase says.

"Life isn't just about going to work and sitting in front of a computer and bringing in as much money as you can. We all have a story. God has written a story and we are meant to find out what the story is and live it," he adds.

He says, for example, that the book inspired him to teach his 15-year-old son to ride a motorcycle.

Eldredge, who is a trained counselor and worked for 13 years for Christian organization Focus on the Family, says we are currently living in a "fatherless age" with many men having abandoned their children, if not physically, then emotionally.

His own father was an alcoholic who after some good years when Eldredge was young became increasingly distant. Chase lost his father, whom he describes as "very cold," just a few months before he attended the retreat.

"A lot of what it brings out is how much you are impacted by your own father. What role model he set for you and how God relates to us as the big father," Chase says.

Eldredge says he uses characters such as Mel Gibson's warrior Wallace in "Braveheart" because the characters often embody men who are engaging their passions by fighting noble battles, rescuing women and finding adventure.

Christian critics

The movement has stirred controversy, attracting criticism from some Christian leaders who fear Elredge may just be reinforcing stereotypes.

While some women have welcomed suddenly receiving flowers and more attention from their husbands, in the long term there are concerns about the impact on marriages.

"The basic premise that men need a princess to rescue has set back male/female relationship in the Church by 30 years. He sanctifies a mythological view of 1950s malehood," says Chapman Clark, associate professor of youth, family and culture at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California.

"It is destructive [to marriages] in the long term," Clark said, adding that treating women as a figurine rather than the personal image of God will hurt relationships over time.

Clark says Eldredge has tapped into an angst among middle-aged white men who are dissatisfied with their lives and for whom depression had become a very serious problem.

Eldredge acknowledges the movement will be judged based on the impact it will have on family life.

"The real test of this ("Wild at Heart") is does it make life better for women? Does it make life better for children? We have received letters from women who are immensely grateful. Marriages have been restored," Eldredge said. *Reuters*

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Historic amphibian plane flies for RP kids, tourism

From page A1

for a tour of the United States, South America and Southeast Asia.

The German-engineered aircraft, Dornier said, had a reputation for being sturdy. During World War II, some 20 Do-24ATTs rescued more than 11,000 people from the Atlantic Ocean.

Sturdy history

The restored aircraft has so far logged a total of 22,000 nautical miles without a hitch, he said.

Dornier recovered the aircraft from the Deutsch Museum in Munich, Germany in 2003. Filipino engineers led by Yco fitted it with three Pratt and Whitney engines and expanded its wingspan to a size larger than a Boeing 737's.

Now looking every bit like a luxury aircraft, it can carry 15 people, including five crew members.

The flight, which also promotes the Philippines as a "must-see and friendly place," has been to Angkor Wat, Cambodia; Bangkok, Thailand; Calcutta and Ameda in India; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Muscat, Oman; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Karachi, Pakistan; Athens and Corfu in Greece; Marina di Pisa and Lago di Como in Italy; Cairo, Egypt; Biscarrosse, France; Vienna, Austria, and Hamburg, Bremen, Berlin, Munich, Oberpfaffenhofen, Stanbergersee, Oberschleibheim, Friedrichshafen and Ammersee in Germany.

THIS time, the stopover is Hamburg, Germany for the restored amphibian plane, once a museum piece, that is now on a world tour.

The tour also covered Biggen Hill and London in the United Kingdom; Shannon, Ireland; Iceland; Greenland, and Goosebay and Ottawa in Canada.

"In most of these destinations, the Do-24ATT made water landings," Dornier told the INQUIRER in a message sent by e-mail.

Tourism campaign

Gitsis said he was proud of what the tourism campaign for the Philippines had achieved.

"With its remarkable performance and sleek vintage look, the Do-24ATT serves as a testament not only to German aviation excellence but also to the ingenuity and dedication that our Filipino crew has demonstrated for this project. We are proud to promote Philippine tourism using this amphibian aircraft," he said.

The tour, the first initiated by the private sector from Clark, was also sponsored by Dornier Technologie and Dornier's father Silvius. Other sponsors provided fuel, ground handling services, hotel accommodations and reduced or waived airport fees.

Wherever the aircraft went, Seair carried the Philippine flag.

Large crowds gathered to watch the Do-24ATT in air shows or to make water landings, according to Dornier.

Gitsis said Prince Tarik of Oman and Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoun, president of the Department of Civil Aviation in Dubai and chair of Emirates Airlines, were among those who welcomed the crew.

Grace and beauty

Crew members had their own stories about the historic tour.

Yco, the leader of the restoration project who trained in the Czech Republic in aircraft maintenance technology, said the team did not encounter any major problems during the entire first leg.

Primed up for the next tour, he was hoping the team would be able to "raise more funds for Unicef and extend our help to the youth."

Salalila, an aircraft specialist, said the most common problem encountered by the team were flat tires. "It was caused by landing in different destinations. But that kind of problem was easy to fix."

Bustamante, one of the pilots, was impressed with the Do-24ATT's special feature which does not allow ice to build up on the plane's nose, wings and propeller.

Burcer, who handles the administrative and financial aspects of the tour, named the plane "Latina" for its beauty and grace.

"It's sexy and it dances when it's up there. People who have seen it fly in the sky are really amazed," she said.

Army officer sacked for order to kill Abra mayor

From page A1

cuting their statements, the two were ambushed in Aurora, Isabela. Rosqueta was killed while Barcelona survived with four bullet wounds.

In separate affidavits issued before they were ambushed, Rosqueta and Barcelona alleged that they were summoned by Mislang to his office and offered P300,000 each as payment for the job.

Initially, Mislang gave them P5,000 each to spy on Luna and her family, whom the colonel claimed were supporters of the communist New People's Army, the soldiers said.

Later, Mislang gave them an additional P20,000, but this time they said they refused.

Under pressure

"We knew what sir wanted us to do was wrong," Barcelona said.

Barcelona said in his affidavit that he and Rosqueta were told the P300,000 was to come from Valera.

Barcelona said: "It was Colonel Mislang who told us."

"The governor's pressuring me already; you haven't complied with the order," Mislang purportedly said in Filipino, according to Barcelona.

Ignoring the order, the two soldiers said they went instead to the battalion's sergeant major to report what happened.

On watch list

Mayor Luna herself had been on the watch list of the Philippine National Police for allegedly maintaining a private army, according to a PNP intelligence report shown to the INQUIRER before last year's elections.

She was also accused in the report of involvement in the killing of persons identified with rival politicians.

The INQUIRER tried to reach Mislang, but he refused to answer his mobile phone.

But he sent a text message which read: "I would like to inform you that proper investigation is being done and I will answer the accusation in proper forum."

Valera denies

Valera, in a telephone interview, dismissed the allegations.

"*Inutusan ko si Mislang* (I ordered Mislang to kill them)? My relationship with Mislang is professional and we are not even close," Valera said.

"I don't even know these people ... [The Luna family] simply does not want to talk things over anymore ... They simply don't like to make peace so they are making up stories."

Mislang was relieved of his post effective Jan. 12. *With a report from Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Filipinas warned against marrying Korean 'Moonies'

WANT to try your luck in South Korea? Well, go ahead. But don't be fooled by the rosy promises of an arranged marriage with a "Moonie." Misery, not marital bliss, awaits you.

Foreign affairs officials issued this warning to Filipino women amid persistent reports that some of those who had entered into such arrangements with Korean members of the Unification Church, known as Moonies, ended up working in nightclubs.

Ambassador Aladdin Villacorte said that Filipino women had been entering the Asian country through arranged marriages with Moonies or as mail-order brides.

The women, enticed into marrying Koreans with promises of a comfortable life, end up working in nightclubs and bars in the country's red light districts under "miserable conditions," he said.

"Filipino women should be extra wary of, if not totally avoid, applying for arranged marriages to Koreans. They must be cautious not to fall prey to unscrupulous agents who offer travel to Korea through marriage under the Korean Unification Church," Villacorte said in a statement.

Recently, agents of the National Bureau of Investigation rounded up six Korean men and five Filipino women allegedly running an illegal mail-order bride business in Parañaque City using a recruitment agency as a front.

The term "Moonies" to refer to members of the Unification Church comes from the name of its founder, Sun Myung Moon.

The church often brings together members who had never met before based on photos and personal information, and performs mass marriages of thousands of couples in Seoul every now and then.

In 2002, it claimed to have at least 4.5 million followers worldwide.

Villacorte advised Filipinos seeking employment in South Korea to follow government procedures, such as verifying employment contracts and documents with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. *TJ Burgonio*

Solon urges gov't to lobby Diet for 'comfort women'

A CONGRESSMAN has asked Malacañang to send a high-level delegation to Japan to lobby for the approval of the compensation bill for "comfort" women now pending before the Japanese Diet.

Rep. Antonio Cuenco (Lakas, Cebu City), chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, yesterday said the compensation bill must be supported by the Philippine government.

The delegation, Cuenco said, should "start conferring with the Japanese parliament" about the passage of the bill, as most Filipino comfort women were now in the twilight of their lives.

"Or else, no Filipino comfort woman will be left standing to finally see this long and overdue justice being served," Cuenco said.

The bill, which seeks to provide compensation to women who were raped and forced to provide sexual services to the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II, was filed last year by the Democratic Party of Japan, Social Democratic Party, Japanese Communist Party and independent lawmakers.

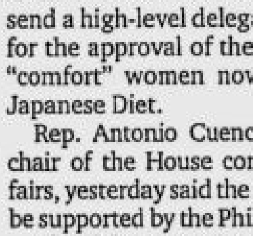
The comfort women, mostly Asians, were of various ethnic and national backgrounds. They included Filipino, South Korean and Chinese women.

The Japanese government had earlier rejected demands to compensate these women.

At the House, Cuenco has called for the approval of a resolution urging the Japanese parliament to take favorable action on the measure.

Cuenco said the Philippine government should start completing the list of Filipinos who were made comfort women during the war. *Carlito Pablo*

Women's group to raise funds


POSADAS

THE ALL Nations Women's Group will hold its annual grand ball on Jan. 27 at the Rigodon Ballroom of the Peninsula Hotel Manila in Makati City.

Proceeds of the affair will go to finance the ANWG scholarship program for poor but deserving students in Metro Manila. Members of the diplomatic corps and other friends of ANWG have been invited to the affair.

A special dance number will be performed by ANWG members. Music will be provided by the Gloria Gatmaitan Band. The affair will start at 7 p.m.

Event chair is Ditas Posadas, ANWG president; co-chairs are Lolita Mirpuri, Lily Adina, Villa Granada de Guia, Arlene Jacob and the ANWG directors.

The women's group promotes international fellowship and goodwill by developing among its members the ability to understand and appreciate the lives and cultures of peoples of different races, religions and political beliefs.

Reservations may be made by calling Precy Embog at 523-6513 or 525-6065, Ditas Posadas at 658-0580, or Lolita Mirpuri at 809-2392.

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- DWRT-FM 99.5, Unit 906-B, Paragon Plaza, Edsa cor. Reliance Street, Mandaluyong City
- DZRU-FM Joey 92.3, 3/F, Jacinta Building II, Edsa, Makati City
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- DXBL-FM 95.7, Agudo Compound, 91 Agudo Road, Lapasan, Cagayan De Oro City
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- DXUE-FM 103.5, 4/F Mindpro Building, La Purisima Street, Zamboanga City
- DXRZ-AM 900khz, Zamaveco Building, Pilar Street, Zamboanga City
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- DXIC-AM 711, Pafs Mejia Bldg., Roxas cor. Aguinaldo St., Iligan City
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5. The promo period is from January 15, 2005 to May 29, 2005.
6. Deadline for the submission of entries is on May 7, 2005.
7. The Regional Raffle Draw schedule is as follows:
- The Visayas Draw will be held at the ABS-CBN Studio, Cebu City on May 25, 2005, Wednesday.
- The Mindanao Draw will be held at the ABS-CBN Studio, Davao City on May 26, 2005, Thursday.
- The Visayas draw will be aired on Sabado na Gyud & the Mindanao draw will be aired on Sayabadabadabado, both on May 28, 2005.
- The Luzon Draw will be held at SM Pampanga on May 28, 2005, Saturday, in cooperation with DWGV-FM. Call (045) 3221311 for details.
- The NCR Draw will be held at SM City North EDSA on May 29, 2005, Sunday, during the DWRX Concert Series. Call 6335414 to 16 for details.
8. A Columbia International Food Products Inc. executive and a BFAD representative will oversee all raffle draws in Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and NCR.
9. All winners will be announced through a winners' ad to be published in a major broadsheet. They will also be contacted via telegram.
10. All winners have 60 days to claim their prizes, or they will be forfeited.
11. Columbia reserves the right to disqualify tampered entries or those with mutilated wrappers.
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New US spy arm trains sights on Philippines

From page A1

desired activities, as is suggested in this article," DiRita said.

The Strategic Support Branch, which has been operating for two years, deploys teams of case officers, linguists, interrogators and technical specialists with special operations forces, according to the Post.

The Post did not say if the governments of the countries where the new espionage group was said to be operating were aware of its activities.

Neither did it say why the Philippines would be a focus of the group.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has strongly backed President George W. Bush's war on terror while battling the communist-led National Democratic Front and the New People's Army, as well as Moro separatist guerrillas.

The United States has placed the NDF, the NPA and the Moro extremist group Abu Sayyaf on its blacklist.

Spy satellites

It has also deployed American special forces units on Mindanao to train local troops in fighting the Abu Sayyaf and help locate the elusive group, using space satellites and unmanned surveillance planes.

Quoting a defense department memo, the Washington Post said the Pentagon may recruit foreign spies that include "notorious figures" whose links to the US government would be embarrassing if disclosed.

The newspaper said the department's espionage activities included missions in both friendly and unfriendly states where conventional war may be distant or unlikely. Those activities traditionally fall to the CIA's Directorate of Operations, it said.

The Strategic Support Branch was established with "reprogrammed" funds and without explicit authority from the US Congress, the newspaper reported, quoting unnamed Pentagon officials.

Penetrating al-Qaida

Rumsfeld's efforts are aimed at giving combat forces more information about their immediate enemy and to penetrate organizations such as al-Qaida, the newspaper reported.

The Post said the defense secretary also was seeking greater independence as intelligence departments and agencies are placed under a newly created position of national intelligence director, an office approved by Congress last year.

It said Lt. Gen. William Boykin, deputy undersecretary for intelligence, acknowledged Rumsfeld intends to direct some missions previously undertaken by the CIA.

RUMSFELD

Discarding old thinking

The newspaper also quoted Assistant Defense Secretary Thomas O'Connell, who oversees special operations policy, as saying Rumsfeld discarded the "hidebound way of thinking" and "risk-averse mentalities" of previous Pentagon officials.

Some members of a US commission which looked last year into the alleged failure of American intelligence bodies to foresee the 9/11 attacks had decried the inadequacy of US human intelligence in warding off terror threats.

The Post said the new group was designed to operate under the defense secretary's direct control.

It said the new group was intended to boost the capabilities of the military's special forces operations by arming them with skills to establish local spy networks and directly access national intelligence databases. *Reuters, AFP*

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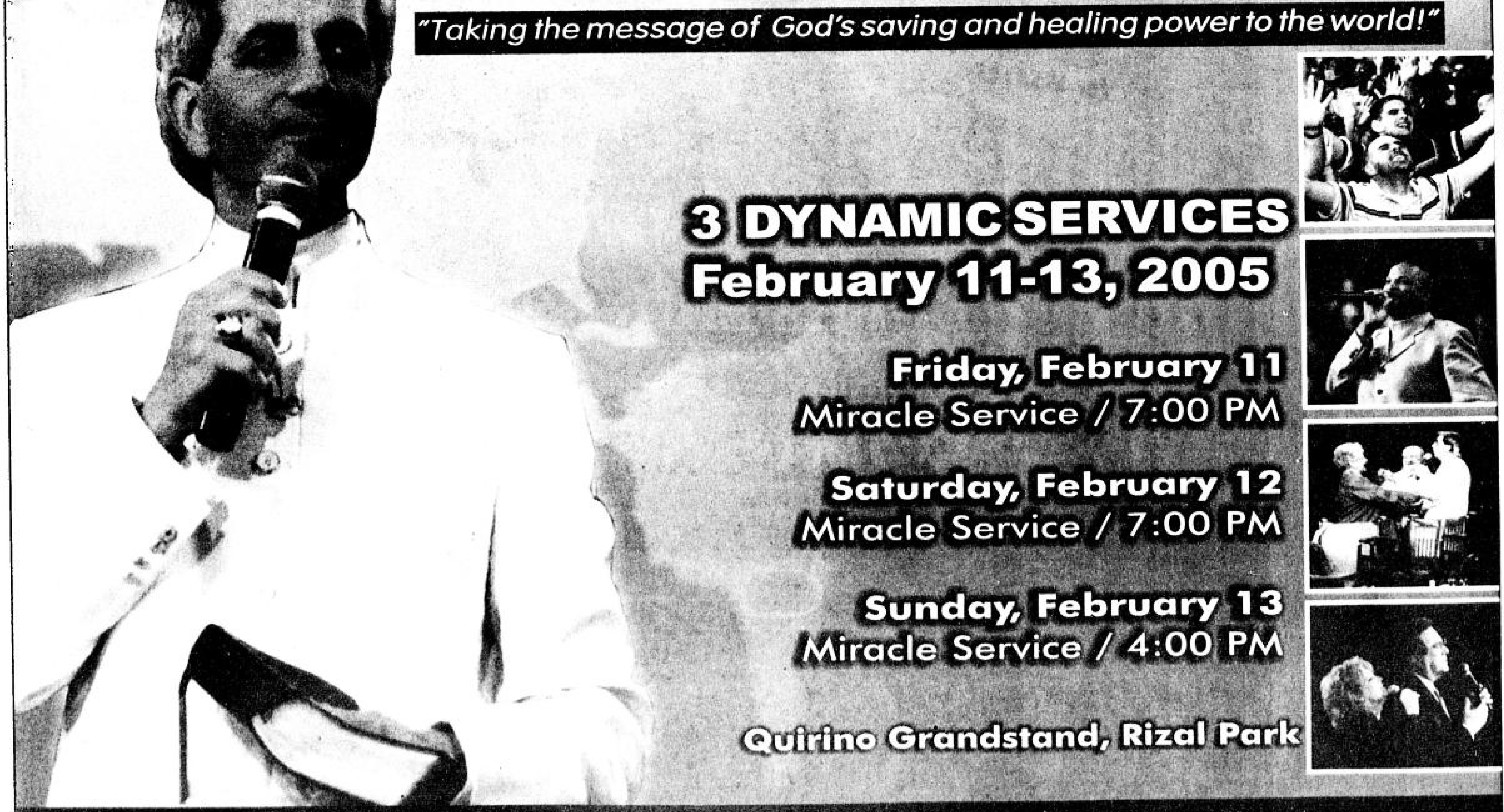

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Bridge program: Abad to decide after next test

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

EDUCATION Secretary Florencio Abad has so far avoided giving a categorical statement on the fate of the controversial high school "bridge program," saying he wanted to see results first.

"It's still on, but we'll evaluate it first," Abad said last week, when asked if he would continue his predecessor's key reform project next school year.

Abad said he wanted to see if the students enrolled in the bridge program would do significantly better in an upcoming English, science and math test than those currently in regular first-year high school.

"If the difference (in their test scores) is not that much, we should try something else. But we can't say that prematurely," the secretary said.

Undersecretary Juan Miguel Luz had said the next test would be conducted in February.

Refresher course

A brainchild of former Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, the bridge program is an added year between elementary and high school to serve as a "refresher course" on the three basic subjects of English, math and science before incoming freshmen could proceed to the regular four-year public high school curriculum.

If the program is discontinued, at least 236,968 students currently enrolled in the program would lag behind their peers one full year.

De Jesus insisted on the program to arrest the declining quality of public school graduates, despite strong opposition from parents and teachers who complained of the additional burden an added year of high school would bring.

But De Jesus was vindicated when 98 percent of the 1.4-million incoming freshmen flunked the High School Readiness Test. Those who failed the HSRT were supposed to take the bridge program.

Upon Malacañang's orders, however, De Jesus relented and made the program optional in the current school year.

When he took over the DepEd last September, Abad said he would continue the program because he also believed in it.

In a related development, Abad said parents and community leaders should have a greater say in how the public schools are run.

Greater say

He said the DepEd was working on guidelines that would give parents, principals, teachers and even local civic groups a major role in decision-making in the local school boards, a task that at present falls on the mayors.

Abad has adopted "Schools First" as the policy battle cry.

"'Schools First' means making the stakeholders, including the parents and local residents, responsible for our schools. It means moving resources and authority down to the local level so they could be accountable for the results," he said.

The present setup has local school boards headed by the mayors and other city or municipal officials. The school principal and a teachers' representative also sit on the board.

The local boards decide how to spend the money in the local school education funds and what projects to undertake for the school.

Each school has its Parents-Teachers-Community Associations (PTCAs) that are independent of the school principal and the school board.

More assertive

But the PTCAs do not have any say in the running of the schools.

"We want the PTCAs to be more assertive," said Abad.

He said he wanted to see the local government executives, principals, teachers, parents and even local NGOs as part of the local school boards.

He envisioned the principal as the chief executive officer in a school.

"We're studying how much power we can give them," Abad said. "Our discussion is how much power we can grant the principals, the school boards and our division superintendents."

DOH: No to condoms as contraceptives

HEALTH officials said Sunday they would not endorse the use of condoms to stem the country's galloping population.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said in a statement that "we don't promote it as a regular type of contraceptive," despite condoms' known effectiveness in preventing the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS.

The Department of Health, which coordinates the country's population control program, limits itself to presenting married couples with options while actively promoting "natural family planning" without the use of contraceptives.

Dayrit said that the government's population control program was separate from its AIDS prevention program, which acknowledges that condoms prevent the spread of the condition, while mostly leaving the distribution of condoms to nongovernment organizations.

A total of 2,176 people in the Philippines are confirmed to have been infected with AIDS but experts warn that the actual figure could be much higher.

The country, with a population of 84 million, has a population growth rate of 2.3 percent, one of the highest in the world.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said last year that she intended to bring the rate down to 1.9 percent but did not explain how this would be done. *AFP*

Asean tourism meet focuses on tsunami

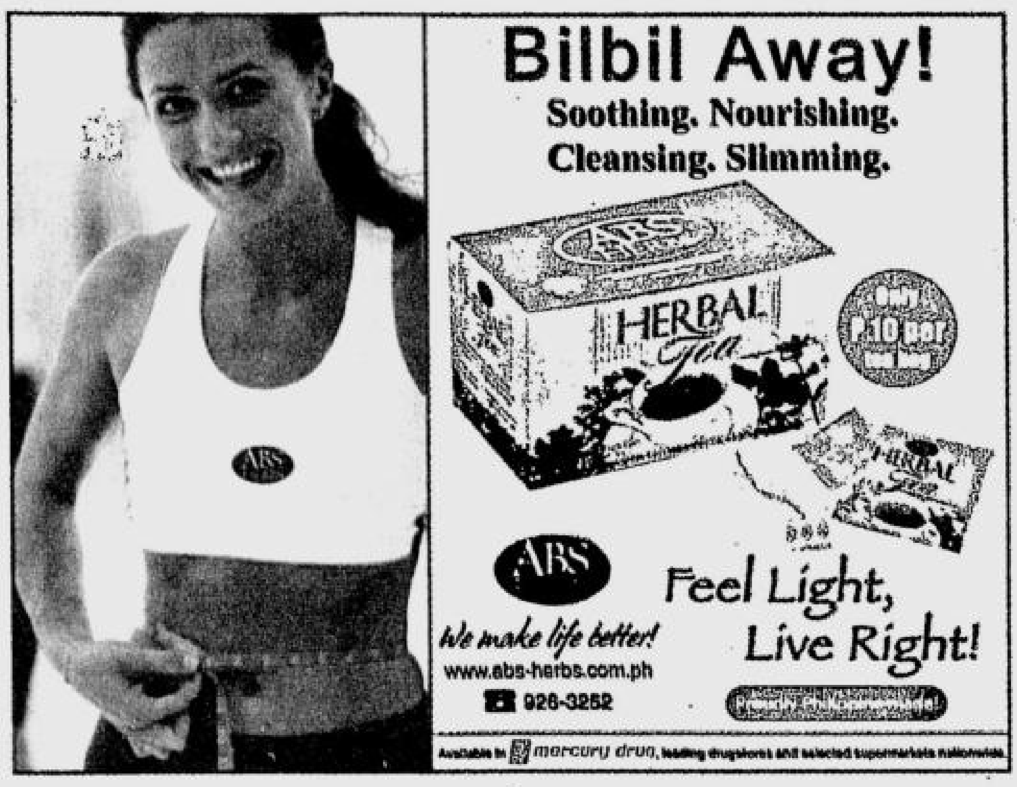
A PHILIPPINE delegation led by Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano is in Langkawi, Malaysia, for the 2005 Asean Tourism Forum.

This year's meeting intends to challenge tourism industry professionals in Asean to consider progressive cutting-edge ideas to capitalize on novel opportunities and meet challenges arising from the tsunami tragedy that hit the region.

In line with this, the Philippine delegation will push for the approval of a joint statement appealing to countries to refrain from issuing travel advisories on Asean nations affected by the tragedy.

If such countries need to issue travel advisories, then these should state only the actual extent and limits of the damage, as well as declare that travel to unaffected regions remains safe and normal, the statement said.

During the forum, Durano will give a briefing on the Philippine tourism industry, including the directions to be taken this year such as intensifying the development of four key markets—China, Korea, Japan and balikbayans.



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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 24, 2005
3rd Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 9:15,24-28
Gospel: Mark 3:22-30

The teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is in the power of Beelzebul: the chief of the demons helps him to drive out demons."

Jesus called them to him and began teaching them by means of stories or parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a nation is divided by civil war, that nation cannot stand. If a family divides itself into groups, that family will not survive. In the same way, if Satan has risen against himself and is divided, he will not stand; he is finished. No one can break into the house of the Strong one in order to plunder his goods, unless he first ties up the Strong one. Then indeed, he can plunder his house.

Truly, I say to you, every sin will be forgiven humankind, even insults to God, however numerous. But whoever slanders the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven: he carries the guilt of his sin forever."

This was their sin when they said, "He has an evil spirit in him."

Commentary

Now the teachers of the Law go after him and say that he is 'possessed by Beelzebul, the chief of demons', in fact he uses this Beelzebul to cast out demons! Not very logical. And Jesus points out that if a nation is divided by civil war it falls, just as if Satan is divided in his house, he'll fall too. The word Satan means 'the hinderer'—whoever or whatever keeps human beings from being the beloved children of God. Or here, Jesus calls him the Strong One and he as much says that he has bound the Strong One by his words and presence in the world.

Who do we hinder from living and acting as the children of God? Who do we keep from living in the freedom of their baptisms? Do we find it easier to blame someone who does good and tells the truth, exposing us for what we are rather than taking to heart what all can see about us? Holy Spirit lay us bare and let us know ourselves in the light of Jesus.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—Writ of certiorari—The writ of certiorari dealt with in Rule 65 of the Rules of Court is a prerogative writ, never demandable as a matter of right, "never issued except in the exercise of judicial discretion." Under the circumstances of this case, petitioner failed to clearly show that an appeal to the Office of the President was not the plain, speedy, and adequate remedy, which would justify judicial intervention. Well settled is the rule that certiorari will lie only when a tribunal, board or officer exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions has acted without or in excess of its or his jurisdiction, or with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction. As a condition for the filing of a petition for certiorari, Section 1 of Rule 65 of the Rules of Court additionally requires that "no appeal, nor any plain, speedy and adequate remedy in the ordinary course of law" must be available. It is, thus, clear that the availability of the right of appeal precludes recourse to the special civil action for certiorari. [Citations omitted.] [Resolution, Justice Chico-Nazario, Second Division, Bulindong vs Dacalos, G. R. BY R. B. VERA

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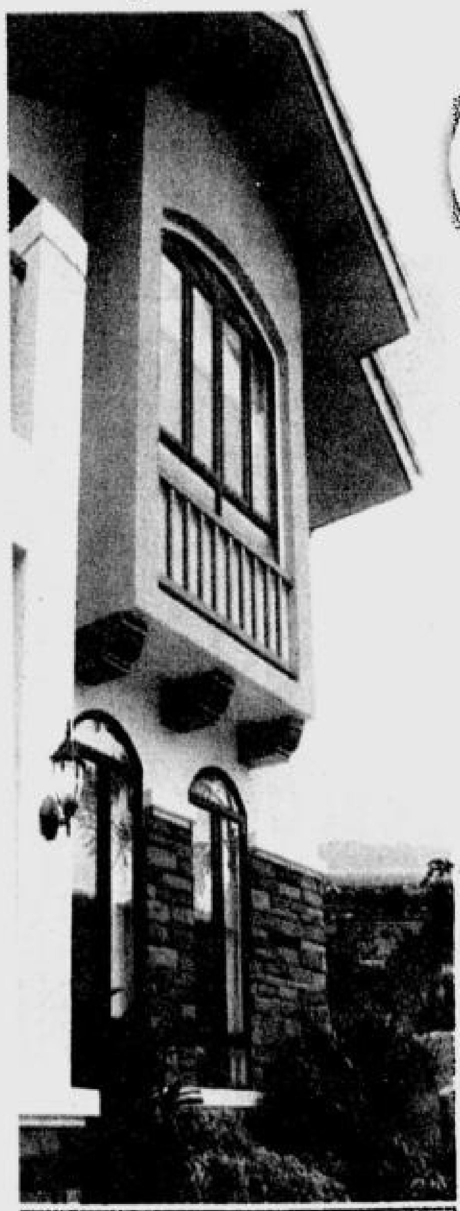

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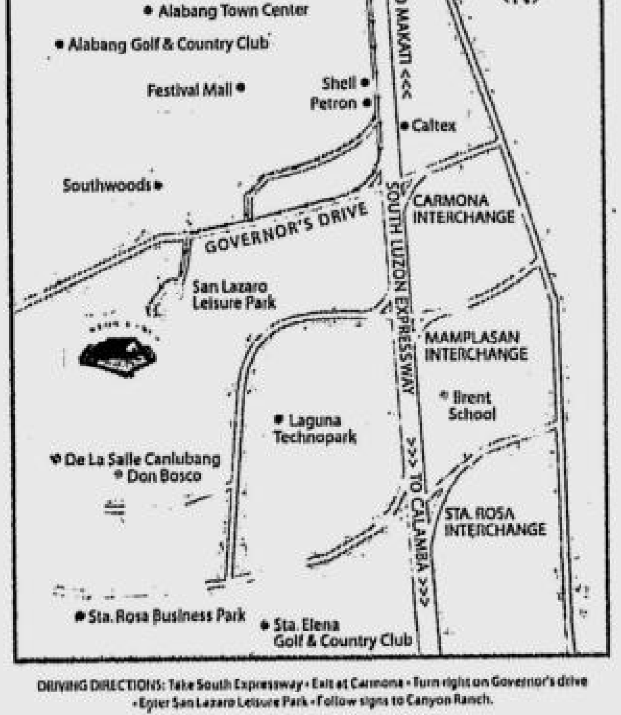

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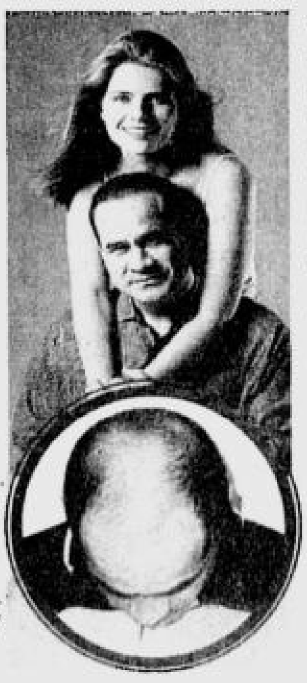

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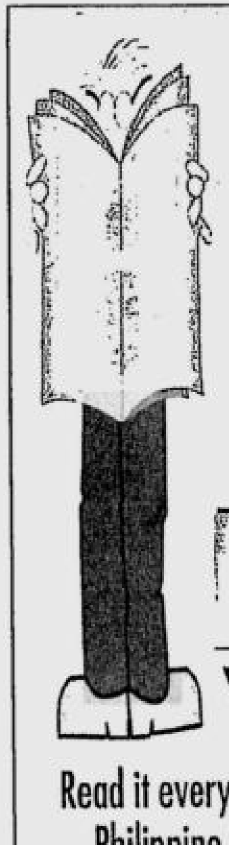

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On the 25th of this month, the Most Rev. Sofronio Aguirre Bancud, SSS, DD, will be formally installed and recognized as the fifth residential Bishop of the Diocese of Cabanatuan, by His Excellency, Most Rev. Antonio Franco, DD, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines.

A native of Tuguegarao, Cagayan, son of Mr & Mrs Antonio Bancud, both deceased. He was well-loved by his flock, as a Blessed Sacrament Father, a religious community in Sta. Cruz Church, as their superior. He succeeded the late Bishop Sofio Balce, D.D.

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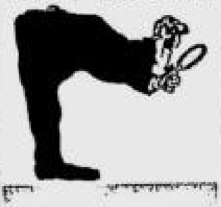

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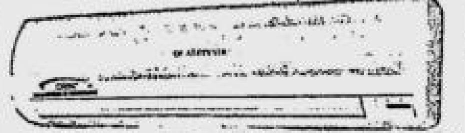

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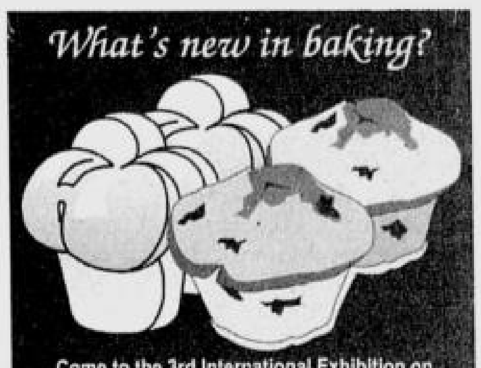

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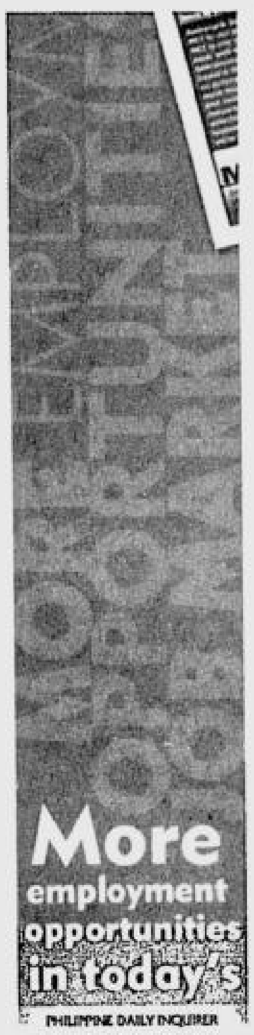

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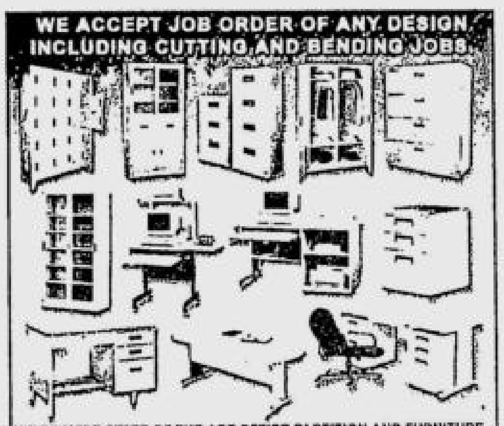

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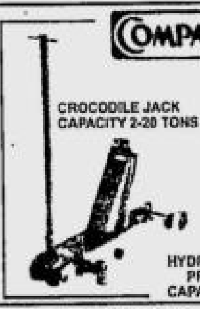

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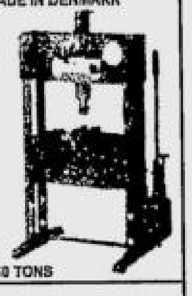

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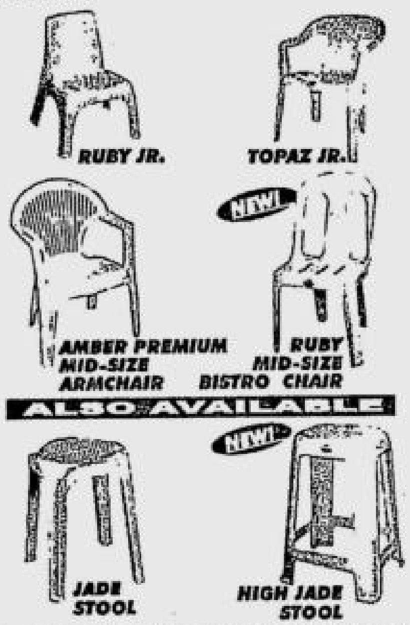

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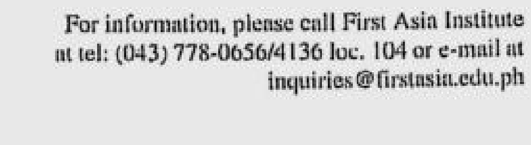

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The WORLD

Survivor rescued 1 month after tsunami

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—Four weeks after killer waves destroyed communities around the Indian Ocean, a lone tsunami survivor was rescued from a remote island, a rare moment of hope among countless tales of grief and loss.

In India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, an archipelago close to the epicenter of the huge Dec. 26 earthquake that triggered the tsunami, a military officer said on Saturday a man had been rescued after surviving for nearly four weeks on coconuts.

The survivor, Michael Mangal, told rescuers the first giant wave sucked him out to sea before subsequent waves flung him back onto the tiny island of Pillow Panja where he discovered everyone else from his village was gone.

It was one of the few pieces of good news in the Indian Ocean where as many as 225,000 were killed after the magnitude 9 earthquake off the Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered the killer waves.

A month on, the military element of a massive international relief effort was starting to scale back.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) said on Sunday it was preparing for the eventual departure of foreign military teams from Sumatra, and was positioning a ship carrying food supplies off the worst-hit west coast of north Sumatra's Aceh province.

The 3,000-ton ship with its own landing craft, loading facilities and enough supplies of rice, noodles and biscuits to feed needy survivors for a month was due to arrive on Monday.

"It will make a significant difference to food distribution on the west coast. Obviously, we are at the stage where we have to make our own arrangements, with the anticipated departure of the assisting militaries," WFP spokesperson Gerald Bourke said in the provincial capital Banda Aceh.

The US military, along with several others, has been providing the backbone of aid distribution operations on the west coast using helicopters off two aircraft carriers.

Some refugees in Banda Aceh fear they are becoming dependent on aid and worry about when international relief efforts wind down.

"I don't want to stay here forever, but I'm not sure how to get out," said Yunus, a tailor who lost his shop and house, and is now living in a refugee camp.

Amin, a civil servant from the ruined west coast city of Calang, said he was fearful.

"Where else can I go? Our relatives here have also lost their homes. They are also not sure what to do in the future," said Amin, whose wife had been pregnant when the tsunami struck and gave birth last week.

SALOMIA, 3, a Sri Lankan tsunami survivor whose parents are missing and presumed dead, holds a doll as she sits atop a broken wall of her house in the town of Kalmunai on Sri Lanka's east coast Jan. 23. Walking restlessly in circles around the debris of her house, Salomia clutched her doll tightly to herself during a visit to her tsunami-destroyed house. She now lives in a temporary shelter. REUTERS

Children traumatized by the disaster that killed their families and destroyed their homes drew pictures expressing their feelings of loss.

One youngster, Zulmiadi, drew a picture of a boy holding onto a dog, with a fallen coconut tree, a house, someone on a road, and at the top, a colored-in section that he says is the tsunami that hit his city Meulaboh, killing up to one third of its 120,000 people.

"I grabbed the dog when the water took me. It swam until it was safe," said Zulmiadi, 15, whose mother was killed.

Aid workers in Aceh still pull hundreds of bodies every day from the rubble of destroyed buildings and the mud left by receding waters.

Bodies are usually dumped unceremoniously in mass graves, but when Indonesian soldiers spotted the corpse of Andri Ary floating on a pond in Banda Aceh, they found a cellular phone in the clenched fist of his bloated hand.

They took the card out of the phone and used it to dial the number of a relative who was able to alert the 23-year-old student's uncle in Banda Aceh who said Ary would get a proper burial in the family's cemetery. *Reuters*

Month of tragedy, unity

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—The death toll in the Asian earthquake and tidal wave disaster which ravaged coastal regions across the Indian Ocean last month continued to rise this week as Indonesia announced the number of dead in the country had edged up by a further 400 to 166,760.

The new tally pushed the global total closer to 220,000.

The Dec. 26 quake off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra measured 9.0 on the Richter scale, the biggest tremor recorded anywhere in the world in four decades.

- **Dec. 26**—0058 GMT (8:58 a.m. in Manila): A quake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale hits the Indian Ocean, 250 km northwest of Indonesia's island of Sumatra.

Thirty minutes later 10-meter-high waves wipe dozens of villages off the map in Sumatra's troubled Aceh province, which has already been devastated by decades of separatist conflict.

Tsunamis travel across the Indian Ocean, striking Thailand, Sri Lanka, India—notably the Andaman and Nicobar islands—Burma, Malaysia, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania.

- **Dec. 27**—The United Nations says the cost of damage from the disaster will run to billions of dollars and require the biggest humanitarian aid operation in the nearly 60-year history of the UN.

- **Dec. 28**—Mass burials are carried out throughout the affected region out of fear of the spread of disease.

The death toll rises to 55,000, rescue services struggle to get organized.

- **Dec. 29**—The World Health Organization warns there could be as many deaths due to disease spreading as a result of the catastrophe as caused by the tsunamis.

The death toll rises to 80,000.

- **Dec. 30**—Four days after the catastrophe, worldwide aid reaches 250 million euros ($340 million) and continues to mount.

The death toll reaches nearly 120,000 including at least 79,940 people in Indonesia, close to 25,000 in Sri Lanka, 11,330 in India and some 2,400 in Thailand.

WHO says as many as five million have been made homeless.

- **Dec. 31**—The death toll passes the 125,000 mark, as Indonesia says it has given up trying to keep an exact count.

- **Jan. 1**—International aid pledges rise to $2 billion, including $500 million pledged by Japan.

UN officials estimate the death toll at 150,000, but warn the true figure may never be known. UN officials say logistical bottlenecks and ruined roads and bridges are hampering the relief effort.

- **Jan. 2**—The United Nations warns it will take weeks for aid to reach many survivors, as floods slow aid operations in Sri Lanka.

- **Jan. 3**—The United Nations says it has received record donations of $1.5 billion in one week, as the latest figures say at least 145,00 people were killed and millions left homeless.

- **Jan. 4**—Britain unveils a proposal to partners in the Group of Eight most industrialized nations for a moratorium on debt repayments from Indian Ocean countries hit by the tsunami.

- **Jan. 5**—The confirmed death toll passes 146,000, with thousands still missing.

Pledges of aid continue to arrive. Australia announces a $764-million package to Indonesia on the eve of the Jakarta summit to discuss how nations can recover from the catastrophe.

Germany becomes the biggest European donor as Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announces his country is raising its aid to 500 million euros.

- **Jan. 6**—Attending the emergency Jakarta summit grouping leaders from 26 nations and international organizations, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appeals for almost $1 billion in cash to tackle the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Asian leaders at the summit endorse a regional project to set up a tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean.

The EU unveils proposals for a further 450-million-euro package of relief while the Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank pledges $500 million. *AFP*

Abbas wins truce promise from Hamas, Israel says

JERUSALEM—Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas has secured a ceasefire deal with the radical Islamist Hamas movement and its smaller rival Islamic Jihad, persuading them to end their campaign of anti-Israeli attacks, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said Sunday, welcoming the news.

"An agreement on a ceasefire was completed between Abu Mazen (Abbas) and terrorist organizations including Hamas and Islamic Jihad," in talks in the Gaza Strip, Mofaz said on military radio.

"This agreement was sealed in exchange for the future integration, notably of Hamas, in the Palestinian political institutions," Mofaz added, in a reference to the Palestinian Authority.

"The agreement constitutes a positive sign and a success for Abu Mazen, we are pleased with it but must closely follow the way the terrorist organizations conduct themselves on the ground."

Abbas met late Saturday with Hamas leaders. His office put out a statement after the meeting saying the talks had been "positive" and centered on "the return of calm that is in the national interest of Palestinians."

But neither side mentioned any truce deal.

A Hamas leader, Sami Abu Zohri, however, later told journalists: "We spoke at length the return to calm and we said that we were ready to discuss this, on condition that it be clearly established that the Israeli occupation ends."

Three militant Palestinian groups, including the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades linked to the mainstream Fatah, said Saturday they were ready to back the new Palestinian leader's bid to end armed conflict with Israel. *AFP*

Iraqi exiles shun election; voter registration extended

SYDNEY—Iraqi exiles around the world are likely to mostly shun the country's historic election after a mere 10 percent of the expected voters signed up in the first six days of registration, the election organizers said Sunday.

Announcing a two-day extension to the week-long process in all 14 countries which are taking part, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) mainly blamed fear and apathy for the massive no-show.

"In Australia, we are getting roughly about 15 percent of what we expected. Some countries are getting much less," said Bernie Hogan, who is heading the operation in Australia for the IOM. The agency is running the election outside Iraq.

Overall the figure worldwide was "about one in 10 of what we expected," Hogan told AFP.

In a statement, the IOM said 131,635 people had signed up in the 14 countries where exiles are being registered, out of a predicted exile electorate for the Jan. 30 vote of more than one million.

The registration period was supposed to end Sunday but in view of the low figures, it has been extended in all 14 countries where exiles were being signed up for the vote, until 7 p.m. Tuesday local time in each country. *AFP*

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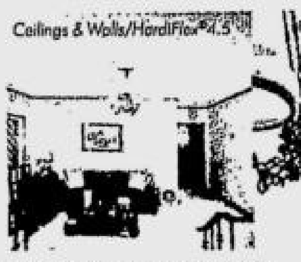

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UK makes case against joining US in attacking Iran

LONDON—Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has drawn up Britain's' case against a military strike on Iran amid fears US President George W. Bush may seek support for a new conflict, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Straw has produced a 200-page dossier that rules out military action and makes the case for a "negotiated solution" to thwart Iran's suspected ambition to produce nuclear weapons, The Sunday Times reported.

It says a peaceful solution led by Britain, France and Germany is "in the best interests of Iran and the international community," while referring to "safeguarding Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology."

The dossier, titled Iran's Nuclear Program, was quietly issued in the House of Commons on the eve of Bush's inauguration last week for fear of provoking a public rift with Washington, the newspaper said.

However, it added that privately tensions are running high between the two nations.

The approach contrasts with the British government's two Iraq dossiers, which were trumpeted to make the case for joining the US-led invasion on March 2003.

The Sunday Times said the message that the British government wants no part in another war in the Middle East will be reinforced by Prime Minister Tony Blair when he meets Bush in Brussels next month and at an Anglo-American summit in Washington after the British general election, expected in May.

It said Straw will also make the case when he meets US secretary of state nominee Condoleezza Rice, a Bush confidante, in London next month.

The perception that the United States is embarking on a course of confrontation with Iran has grown since The New Yorker magazine reported this week that US commandos have been operating inside Iran since mid-2004, secretly scouting targets for possible air strikes.

The Pentagon attacked the story by investigative reporter Seymour Hersh as "riddled with errors of fundamental fact" but did not expressly deny conducting covert reconnaissance missions.

Vice President Dick Cheney, declaring on a radio talk show this week that Iran was "right at the top of the list" of global problems, warned that Israel might launch a preemptive strike on its own to shut down Iran's nuclear program.

But Cheney played down the likelihood of US military action. *AFP*

WORLD HERITAGE ATTRACTION

Old steep rafter roofs covered by snow shine from lights in Shirakawa, central Japan, Jan. 22. Japan's popular tourist spot in this deep mountainside draws thousands of tourists who view the annual light up on the 14 farm houses, which are listed as World Heritage. AP/KYODO NEWS

US military options in Iran not good, analysts say

By Jim Mannion

WASHINGTON—With the bulk of its ground forces tied down in Iraq, the United States has compelling reasons to avoid military action against neighboring Iran even while stepping up pressure to halt its nuclear program, analysts said here.

"There are no good military options," James Carafano, a military expert with the conservative Heritage Foundation, said Friday.

The United States could launch pinpoint strikes on targets in Iran from US warships or from the air. But short of an imminent threat from nuclear armed Iranian missiles, any gain would likely be outweighed by the trouble Iran could cause US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, he said.

Anthony Cordesman, an expert on Iran at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Iran "would see any preemptive attack as encirclement."

"It would probably react hard to whatever happened, and that would make it more destabilizing than stabilizing," he said in an interview.

"But there would be many people who argue just the opposite," he cautioned.

Indeed, the perception that the United States is embarking on a course of confrontation with Iran has grown here since The New Yorker magazine reported this week that US commandos have been operating inside Iran since mid 2004, secretly scouting targets for possible air strikes.

The Pentagon attacked the story by investigative reporter Seymour Hersh as "riddled with errors of fundamental fact" but did not expressly deny conducting covert reconnaissance missions.

The US military already has its hands full in Iraq, where 150,000 US troops are struggling to contain a predominantly Sunni insurgency.

A ground war with Iran would be unsustainable, Carafano said in an interview.

"We couldn't do another large scale ground operation without a major mobilization that would require mobilizing basically all of the national guard," he said.

"Even if we wanted to do that, it would be pretty obvious because it would take us months if not years to get the national guard up and ready to go."

Even a limited US attack on Iran, which shares a 1,450-kilometer open border with Iraq, would invite Tehran to use its influence among Iraq's Shiites to sabotage the separate peace US forces have enjoyed in southern Iraq. The same is true in Afghanistan, which has a 900-kilometer border with Iran.

"When you're trying to stabilize Iraq and you've got this long border between Iran and Iraq, and you're trying to keep the Iranians from interfering in Iraq so you can get the Iraq government up and running, you shouldn't be picking a war with the Iranians," said Carafano.

"It just doesn't make any sense from a geopolitical standpoint," he said.

Iran is believed to protect its most sensitive facilities by dispersing, burying and hardening them, learning from the 1981 Israeli air strike on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor.

So the payoff from surgical strikes on suspected nuclear facilities would be uncertain and temporary, Carafano said.

"On the other hand," said Cordesman, "one can argue that a successful strike has a powerful intimidating and deterrent impact."

"So there will always be those people who argue that the short-term political cost will be offset by the longer term impact on Iran's political behavior and military capabilities," he said.

Moreover, he said, it's unknown to outsiders how close Iran is to gaining a nuclear weapon, or what the US military has learned about its efforts, further obscuring the course of action the United States may take.

"When you deal with any power that proliferates that is hostile, you are going to constantly update and improve your contingency plans, and you are going to carry out intelligence reconnaissance," he said.

"One problem is, you are going to carry out virtually exactly the same intelligence effort if you are contemplating military options or if you are trying to make arms control work, or put pressure on the UN and Europe to be more effective in their negotiating effort," he said. *AFP*

JP Morgan Chase admits making money from slavery

NEW YORK—After a careful review of its history to which it had agreed, JP Morgan Chase disclosed its historic connection with slavery in the United States and apologized.

"Recently, JP Morgan Chase completed extensive research examining our company's history for any links to slavery to meet a commitment to the city of Chicago," the company said in a statement released Thursday.

"We are reporting that this research found that, between 1831 and 1865, two of our predecessor banks—Citizens Bank and Canal Bank in Louisiana—accepted approximately 13,000 enslaved individuals as collateral on loans and took ownership of approximately 1,250 of them when the plantation owners defaulted on the loans," it added.

"We all know slavery existed in our country, but it is quite different to see how our history and the institution of slavery were intertwined. Slavery was tragically ingrained in American society, but that is no excuse.

"We apologize to the American public, and particularly to African-Americans, for the role that Citizens Bank and Canal Bank played during that period.

"Although we cannot change the past, we are committed to learning from and emerging stronger because of it," the company said.

JP Morgan Chase said that, as the events took place in Louisiana, it would set up a $5-million college scholarship program for students living in the southern state. *AFP*

ANN editors to attend World Economic Forum

BANGKOK—China, India, Tsunami and global climate changes are among the dominating topics of this week's annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos which will be attended by all editors of Asia News Network, an alliance of 14 newspapers in 12 Asian countries.

The forum will be opened by British Prime Minister Tony Blair who will lay out his priorities as President of the G8 group of nations for the coming year.

Two editors of Asia News Network will also be on the podiums. Zhu Ling, editor in chief of China Daily, will be a panelist at discussion on "What does it mean to be Chinese."

Suthichai Yoon, editor in chief of Nation Multimedia Group, will moderate a session on "Asia's New Balancing Act" with speakers including Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan; Josep Borrell Fontelles, president European Parliament; Yoriko Kawaguchi, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Japan; James A. Leach, congressman from Iowa (R); and Shen Guofang, assistant minister of foreign affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Aside from China Daily and The Nation, other members of Asia News Network are The Straits Times (Singapore), Vietnam News, Jakarta Post, Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Star and Sin Chew Daily (Malasia), The Statesman (India), the Island (Sri Lanka), Daily Star (Bangladesh), Korea Herald, Daily Yomiuri and Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan). Visit www.asianewsnet.net.

WEF's Executive Chairman Prof. Klaus Schwab said of this year's theme—Taking Responsibility for Tough Choices—"We find ourselves at a crucial moment for the world and its leaders. There are a number of new beginnings, from the new presidency of the European Commission to the election of a new President for the Palestinian Authority, to the new leadership in Ukraine. Leaders from all sectors of society will come to Davos this year to work on ways to consolidate and build on these new beginnings to improve the state of the world."

"What is needed is 'pragmatic optimism,' the resolve to work with the world we have, to make a world as it should be," he said.

Over the course of the five-day meeting, more than 2,250 participants from 96 countries will convene in Davos, including more than 20 heads of state or government, 70 Cabinet ministers, 26 religious leaders, 15 union leaders and more than 50 heads of nongovernmental organizations. Around 50 percent of the participants are business leaders drawn principally from the Forum's members—1,000 of the foremost companies from around the world and across all economic sectors.

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OPINION

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Editor in Chief **Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc**
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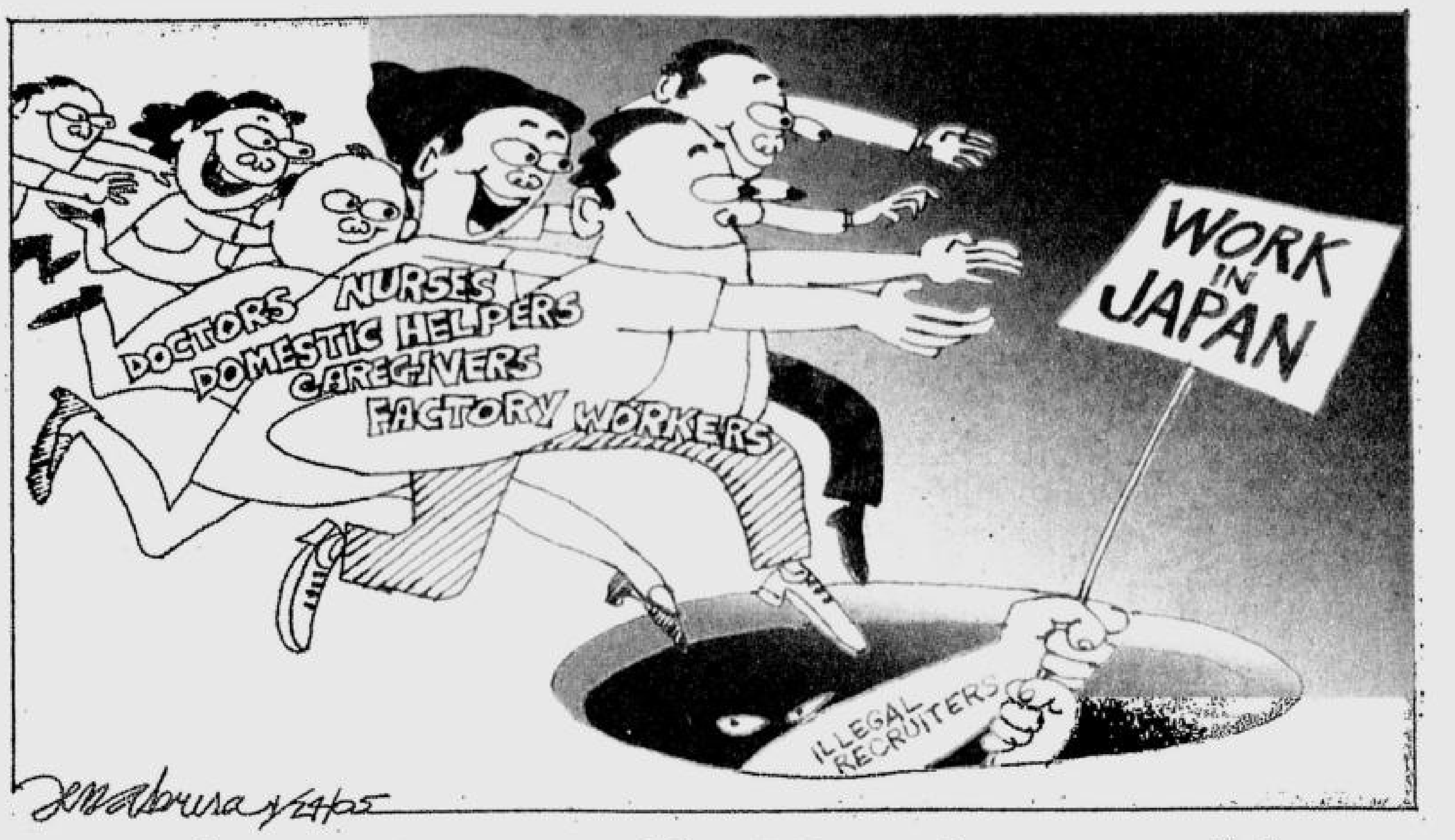

The Bush jubilee

EDITORIAL

WHAT has US President George W. Bush's extraordinary second inaugural address wrought? Mainly, it has pushed Americans right to the brink. The leader of the world's only superpower has asked his fellow citizens to take a leap of faith with him, but in truth it is a suicide jump into a dangerous world.

On its face, the new Bush doctrine is both categorical and unobjectionable: "So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." But the doctrine seeks to spread the gospel of freedom throughout the world in a way guaranteed to subvert it.

Bush is not the first American president to raise the banner of freedom on inauguration day. His own father, in 1989, unfurled the flag. "For a new breeze is blowing, and a world refreshed by freedom seems reborn; for in man's heart, if not in fact, the day of the dictator is over." (Bush senior was the same man who, in 1981, toasted the dictator Ferdinand Marcos' "adherence to democratic principles.")

But most American presidents have used freedom's standard, not to reshape the world, but America itself. In 1969, in Richard Nixon's first address, the challenge was racial. "We have given freedom new reach, and we have begun to make its promise real for black as well as for white." In Ronald Reagan's second inauguration, it was primarily economic. "The time has come for a new American emancipation—a great national drive to tear down economic barriers and liberate the spirit of enterprise in the most distressed areas of our country."

Most American presidents have also believed that freedom is best served through the power of example. In 1965, for instance, Lyndon Johnson described the United States in city-on-a-hill terms: "Conceived in justice, written in liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind." In 1981, the first time he took his oath, Reagan described a similar vision: "We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom."

Most American presidents have also preferred to speak of freedom in the language of service. Carter: "The passion for freedom is on the rise. Tapping this new spirit, there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane." Bush senior: "We as a people have such a purpose today. It is to make kinder the face of the nation and gentler the face of the world."

Now what has Bush junior done, exactly? In an increasingly pluralist world threatened by the specter of religious extremism and political fundamentalism, he has turned freedom into an American religion.

Using evangelical language, Bush announced the new mission. "America, in this young century, proclaims liberty throughout all the world, and to all the inhabitants thereof." It is an echo of Leviticus 25:10, when the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob instructed Moses: "Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you."

Thus, the new Bush doctrine is not merely a restatement of Jimmy Carter's confession in 1977: "Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights." It is not merely a reiteration of Bill Clinton's pledge in 1993, in his first inauguration. "Our hopes, our hearts, our hands, are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause."

The new Bush doctrine is Manifest Destiny all over again, but this time in theological terms. As author David Domke has written: "The result, by implication in the president's rhetoric, is that the administration has transformed Bush's 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists' policy into 'Either you are with us, or you are against God.'" Pity the opposition, both in the United States and abroad.

By assuming his new role as high priest and prophet of freedom, Bush has not made the world safe for democracy. On the contrary, he has made it more difficult for democracy to take root elsewhere in the world.

Medicines imported by RP gov't are not fake

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

MULTINATIONAL pharmaceutical companies are currently on a propaganda drive to scare Filipino consumers into buying only their own branded medicines. This is a reaction to the efforts of the Philippine government, through the Philippine International Trading Corp. (PITC), to provide Filipinos with cheaper medicines from other countries, notably India. The propaganda line of the multinationals is that the PITC imports are fake. False.

In legal parlance, drugs coming from other countries but of the same brand as those manufactured here, are called "counterfeit." They are made of the same ingredients and the same formulation as those made here. They are even manufactured by sister companies (in India and Europe) of the multinationals here. Technically, they are made by the same company, but by its different branches. Yet they are called "counterfeit" when they are imported by countries where they are not manufactured. They are the same medicines, genuine products, only they are made in another country. They are legally termed "counterfeit."

But they are not "fake" in the sense that they are made of different materials as the real ones or are harmful to health. Unfortunately, in the Philippines, "counterfeit" is often mistaken for "fake," as in "spurious" or "fraudulent." But that is what the multinationals are trying to plant in the minds of Filipino consumers: that all imported medicines, even those made by their sister companies, are "fake."

No, they are not. They are the same medicines as those made by the multinationals here. The only difference is that they are very much cheaper than those manufactured here.

The multinationals are not making clear the difference between "counterfeit" and "fake" for obvious reasons. The strange thing is why the PITC is not explaining the difference to protect its own imports.

Even Sen. Pia Cayetano has been taken in by this false propaganda. At a hearing of the Senate committee on health, it was obvious that she also confuses "counterfeit" drugs with "fake" drugs, as did the other committee members. Cayetano said the Department of Health, Bureau of Customs, PITC and the Drug Stores Association of the Philippines (DSAP) should "disseminate information necessary to combat the illegal trade."

One necessary information to enlighten the public is precisely to differentiate between "counterfeit" and "fake drugs." And in the second place, the drugs being imported by the PITC are not "illegal." The PITC was tasked precisely to import medicines because those manufactured here by the multinationals are so expensive they are beyond the reach of the poor. Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, chief of the PITC, was at the hearing, but he did not take the opportunity to explain that the medicines his agency are importing are not "fake." Neither did the representatives of the DOH, who should know better.

Why have the multinationals embarked on this false propaganda? Because they are afraid of the competition they may face from the cheap drugs the PITC is importing from India, Pakistan and Europe. The multinationals have nothing to be afraid of because they control 80 percent of the Philippine drug market. Filipino pharmaceutical companies, of which Unilab is the biggest, have the remaining 20 percent.

The multinationals compose an oligopoly. Only one company manufactures the different medicines of the different drug companies. And they are marketed by one big drugstore chain, Mercury Drug, that has hundreds of branches all over the country. Many of the small family owned *boticas* and *farmacias* have been killed off by this chain.

And that is why the multinational drug companies can dictate their high prices. They have no real competition, like the Big 3 oil companies.

And that is why then Trade Secretary Mar Roxas thought of importing medicines from India, where they are priced a fraction of what they command here. The present PITC is continuing the importations and distributing them through government hospitals and clinics and health centers. These are not enough, however, so the PITC is distributing the cheaper drugs through the small *boticas* and *sari-sari* stores to make them accessible to as many people as possible. And that is why Cayetano told the committee hearing that most of the fake drugs "are sold in *sari-sari* stores and small drugstores," and urged the public to "buy only from reputable drugstores (meaning Mercury) and pharmaceutical companies" (meaning the multinationals). The target of the propaganda is obviously the cheap imports of the government.

Of course, there are really fake drugs manufactured here by illegal, small backyard companies but the multinationals are not afraid of them. What they are really afraid of are the legitimate government imports. And there may really be some medicines smuggled here. But that is because local prices are so high that it makes smuggling profitable.

Let me repeat: the medicines being imported by the PITC from India and Europe are much cheaper but they are not fake. The Philippine government will not import fake medicines.

Why can India make the same medicines much cheaper? Because it does not have to pay for the patent rights by using a different process but using the same ingredients. We should change our patent laws so we can do the same thing and remove our people from the greedy clutches of the multinationals.

* * *

REMINDER: This evening, at 6:30, is the inauguration of the Front Page piano bar and Plaridel's clubhouse and art gallery on T.M. Kalaw Street, near the Rizal Park in Manila. Journalists and their friends are invited.

Dangerous

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE BBC merely confirms what most of the world has known since 9/11. George W. Bush is a dangerous man. He is not the nemesis of terror, he is the spreader of terror.

Only the Philippines, India, and Poland do not think so. On the average, across all countries, 58 percent of the people BBC interviewed believe Bush's reelection has made the world an unsafe place to live in. Unfortunately for Americans, the animosity is extending past Bush to them as well. The BBC sample, 21,000 of them in 21 countries, made no distinction between the American government and the American people, between Bush and his constituents. "Negative feelings about Bush are high and are generalizing to the American people who reelected him," said BBC.

I don't know about Poland, but I do know that the Philippines and India have one thing in common, which is the spectacular divide between the rich and poor. Which is pockets of opulence coexisting alongside unthinkable misery, which is mansions or palaces surrounded by high walls coexisting with hovels and cardboard dwellings tumbling out like flood. Which is a small caste of Brahmins coexisting with a mass of Untouchables, which is enlightenment and brilliance coexisting with ignorance and dimwittedness. It's not surprising many Indians see the world the same way as many Filipinos.

The difference, of course, is that India was colonized by the British and we were colonized by the Americans. Gandhi freed them from their yoke, not the least from the subjugated mind that went with it. Nobody did the same thing for us. To this day, we seem to think Bush is beloved by all the freedom-loving peoples of this earth.

Well, he's not. And unfortunately for us, our misimpressions about the world do not carry a small price. What particularly scares the hell out of me is the breathtaking idiocy with which we advertise our lackey-ness to the fellow before the world. That is patent with our recent acceptance of being chief enforcer of Bush's "anti-terrorist" campaign in this part of the world. Only a couple of weeks ago, and only less than a couple of years of our being thrust into the UN Security Council, we agreed to head a "super committee against terrorism," as Ambassador Lauro Baja proudly put it. Only a country that enjoys being humored, or being *uto-uto*, could possibly have grabbed a gift nobody wanted.

You would imagine that the abduction of three Filipinos in Iraq and Afghanistan would already have taught us lessons in prudence. Those three aren't the last, certainly not with this kind of posturing. And that is probably the least of our worries. If you saw the CNN and BBC interviews across the globe last year shortly before the US elections, you'd know that Arabs absolutely loathe the Bush. It's a level of anger and resentment that makes for wars of attrition. They cannot feel very hospitable to a people who adore him, and who have a president that's anxious to do his bidding. It's not American aid that's keeping us afloat, it's the OFWs' dollar remittances. You want to make war on that?

But what's truly unfortunate, and alarming, is that the anger and resentment are spilling over to the American nation and not just to the American Caesar. It fuels the belief, spread by the Bush gang itself, that the anti-Bush sentiments around the globe are essentially anti-American sentiments. These things have a way of turning into vicious cycles, Americans turning more paranoid, agreeing to emergency measures—including "preemptive" ones—to defend themselves, and pissing off the world even more.

I've always thought America was rived between two worlds, between the worlds of slavery and anti-slavery, between the worlds of imperialism and anti-imperialism, between the worlds of Randolph Hearst, Joseph McCarthy, and George W. Bush, on one hand, and Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain and Martin Luther King, on the other. With the former often getting the upper hand and pushing back democracy as the American Founding Fathers knew it, apart from giving America a wretched image abroad. The notion of forcing "our way of life" down the throats of peoples across the world, which was the premise of William McKinley's imperial venture more than a century ago, is anathema to democracy. It is a contradiction in terms, the very spirit of democracy being freedom and choice. The 21,000 BBC interviewed are not terrorists. Neither do they approve of terrorism. That is why they do not approve of Bush, too.

I myself have always distinguished between the American government and the American people, between American policy and the American spirit. The second, which expresses itself in the ardent defense of rights and freedoms at home, and in spectacular achievements in science, literature and sports, is admirable. The first, which expresses itself in the piling up of weapons of mass destruction and the indifference to planetary concerns other than dreams of conquest, is detestable. The second is a beacon in a windswept sea, the first is the wind that blows over a field of death.

The American people in any case have been known to carry out their Edsas, if in less loud and cantankerous ways than their counterparts across the Pacific. They did rise to bury McCarthy and they did rise to impeach Nixon. They've already given their current president fair warning they do not believe in his war (55 percent of Americans told a Washington Post/ABC News survey the Iraq War wasn't worth fighting for) and he should not construe their votes as a mandate for it. But, well, they've got their work, or protest, cut out for them. There is so little time, the clock is ticking, the American image is being tattered everywhere by the minute.

All because they've put a caption under the American Eagle that reads: Dangerous.

Conflicting views

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SENATE President Franklin Drilon called up to dispute the assertion in this column that had the Senate exerted extra effort to pass another tax revenue measure, Standard & Poor's might not have downgraded our sovereign credit rating a notch lower. I had pointed out earlier that it was no secret that S & P's was assiduously monitoring the performance of Congress on those measures. Moreover, enough warnings had been made by various quarters about the need for Congress to show resolute effort in addressing the burgeoning budget deficit and our total debt—now about 110 percent of our GDP—by passing at least a couple of tax measures.

* * *

I pinned the blame on the Senate because the House had passed five revenue bills (three of them among the eight Palace priority bills), when the latter adjourned for the Christmas break, whereas the former had passed only the so-called "sin taxes" (which became law last month). A special session called after Christmas didn't result in any more bills passed in the Senate. Since the resumption of session earlier this month, another bill, on the rationalization of fiscal incentives, was ratified by both chambers, while the House passed on third and final reading the lateral attrition bill granting incentives to Internal Revenue and Customs personnel for improved collections. But by then S & P's had downgraded our credit rating, raising fears of its triggering a domino effect, as the rating by Moody's Services is expected early next month.

* * *

I told Drilon that, perhaps, if the Senate had succeeded in passing another bill—say, the lateral attrition bill, which was among the three Palace priority revenue bills passed by the House before the Christmas break—S & P's might not have downgraded RP's credit rating. He disagreed, saying that the only bill that might have dissuaded the rating agency at that time was the one increasing VAT from 10 to 12 percent. This bill could raise a substantial amount of revenue but, he conceded, this was not easy to pass because of its wide-ranging implications across social classes.

It's true. In the House, Rep. Liza Masa raged over the "railroading" of the VAT bill. But last week, that chamber, which took up the sponsorship debates on VAT during the special session, finally passed it on third reading by a vote of 136 for and 26 against. It will now be forwarded to the Senate and it will be interesting to see what happens there. Will the Senate act on the VAT bill? On the other hand, the Senate is against passing the tax amnesty bill, among those approved by the House before Christmas. On this bill, the Senate finds support among many businessmen who feel that an amnesty discourages honest payment of taxes.

* * *

Drilon conceded that various quarters perceived the Senate as directly to blame for the rating downgrade. But he felt it's unfair to portray his chamber as doing nothing, except to delay the passage of the revenue measures through interminable debates. In his perception, what the Senate does "to advantage" is to analyze the impact of the bills, and proof of this is the Senate version of the "sin taxes" measure which is far better as it will bring in much bigger revenue than the House version.

Drilon regards the downgrade as a "wake-up call" for the executive branch which has "a direct handle" in the disbursal of funds, stressing that it has to reduce the borrowings.

* * *

To some critics, "analyzing" is simply "delaying." But Drilon's assertion of the Senate's diligence is echoed by his colleagues. A senator, in fact, grumbled that what the House does, to earn *pogi* points from the public, is to simply railroad the passage of bills in the chamber, leaving it to the bicameral conference committee to refine the provisions. In other words, says this senator, the House members fight it out with the senators in the bicam, instead of among themselves in the House.

The House members, however, hotly protest this assertion, saying that the problem with the senators is that they don't want to work long hours, and go home by 10 p.m.; whereas the congressmen often work into the wee hours. They also note that a number of House lawmakers held hearings through the last Christmas break and produced the needed quorum for the special session, except that when they saw nothing was happening in the Senate, some of them didn't bother to return. "*Kulang sa effort ang mga* senators," rued a House member, who added that the approval by the House ways and means committee of six revenue measures in five months is a "record of sorts." Their frustration over the non-passage of bills has led to agitation for a shift to a parliamentary/unicameral legislature. But then the resolution seeking this shift would need the approval of the Senate.

* * *

Among the significant gifts I received last Christmas was a set of social note cards from a longtime friend, former Sen. Santanina Rasul. It featured paintings by her granddaughter, Romina Rasul Bernardo, daughter of Amina Rasul and former finance undersecretary Romy Bernardo. The paintings featured faces of young boys, which the card said "were inspired by child soldiers in the Philippine Mindanao conflict." Santanina related that in 2003, Romina went into the jungles of Jolo, Sulu, to meet and interview child soldiers. The encounter left a permanent mark on the young girl's consciousness. She painted the scenes in Jolo from memory, when she was in Williams College in Virginia. The faces of the young boys are like those of boys everywhere, happy and smiling, as though strangers to a violent conflict. They would make a good exhibit one day; perhaps, to mark the end of the Mindanao conflict—soon?

A dark, make-believe world

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

THAT is what reader Hernan Hormillosa, a social worker, fears our society could become if the Filipino *masa* would be sweet-talked by "devious image-makers." Hormillosa is referring to movie personalities, like Fernando Poe Jr. and his widow Susan Roces, who are being packaged by some members of the political elite into "messiahs" who can bring us out of the rut.

Hormillosa's reaction, and those of countless others, filled my mailbox after I wrote my column "Susan, Marcos also stole our dreams." (PDI, 1/3/05) I have no inkling as to the demographic profile of my reader-reactors, but many of them identify themselves as overseas Filipino workers based in the United States, Canada, Germany, Singapore, Qatar, etc. The rest are staying in various parts of the country.

But if I were to be unscientific and use the reactions as a gauge, I would say that the anti-FPJ easily outnumber the pro-FPJ. An old friend from Bacolod, Bugsy Lopez Bongco, wrote to tell me she could just imagine the volume of "hate mail" I must have gotten for that article. I told her that in truth there were only three out of about 50 letters. One in particular thanked me for my "stupid opinion" and said that I was simply part of the crowd that looks down on "mere *artistas*."

"Too bad, Ms Roces is adored by millions and you're just an unknown columnist from a small corner!" If what the reader meant by "small corner" is this once-a-week column space that is shared with two other writers, this is indeed "small." It would be another story, however, if that "small corner" she was referring to is Mindanao which till now is indeed still treated as a small corner by some folks—as if we in Mindanao have nothing to say about the national state of affairs.

By and large, however, it feels good to know the pulse of readers and to know what they want to read from you. For example, it was not so much as being anti-FPJ that delighted many and irked a handful. Not a few deplored our short memories of Ferdinand Marcos and martial law.

From Houston, Texas, Archie Andal wrote: the fact that the Marcoses are "still free and venerated" only indicates what a damaged society we have truly become. Another reader, Mariz Cubelo, said it is our duty to continue to "remind others about Poe's association with the Marcoses." Aida Mortell put it directly: "Looks like the media have forgotten the Marcos regime and the corruption of the deposed president."

Reader Arturo Cabrera said I was "one million percent correct" to ask Susan where she was when Marcos stole our dreams. Reader Dan Peña suggested the answer: "Please don't ask that question to Susan. She does not know the answer."

"For her to say that the Arroyo government stole her husband's dream is presumptuous," said Alice Cacnio of Richmond, Canada. A New Yorker friend from Mindanao, Dr. Jessie Kwong, said it is about time to "call a spade a spade." For John Onzal of Zamboanga City, his "unsolicited advise" was to forget packaging Susan as another Cory.

Others were far from scathing. Bert Lazo from San Francisco, California noted that it is "poetic justice for these very same groups to suffer and experience the pain they have inflicted on the populace" during the Marcos regime. Lazo closed his e-mail by addressing Ms Roces: "We are sorry for your temporary loss, but are you sorry for the Filipino people's seemingly irretrievable loss that keeps perpetuating through the passage of time?"

Puri Gonzalez expressed the idea that "now is the time to stop this hackneyed tendency of our countrymen to eulogize so-called 'martyrdom' that is not warranted by any stretch of the imagination." A reader who gave her name only as Melissa said that comparing FPJ to Ninoy is "glaring proof of how lost we are as a nation."

"We cannot allow celebrities to take advantage of the rut the country is in," said Randy Farin of San Diego, California.

"I felt terribly sorry for the people who tried to politicize their idol's death," said Dr. Joselito Mora of Australia.

An interesting rejoinder was the one that I got from Ricardo B. Velasco who said I was being too much generous to FPJ to consider him "in a sense a case for the Purple Heart." Mr. Velasco pointed out that the Purple Heart is awarded only to soldiers who sustain wounds or die in combat, "an experience that FPJ never found himself in other than the movies. I will not deny that FPJ helped a lot of poor people with his charity, and for that he should be praised and recognized, but please, not with the Purple Heart." Well said, Mr. Velasco.

One reader, Adi Pelaez, related the time when a drunk FPJ was said to have shouted "vindictive words" at some people wearing yellow T-shirts at a restaurant in Makati Cinema Square in 1987. Pelaez asked where Susan indeed was when Pelaez's own brother was terribly tortured in what she called a torture chamber of the Vers somewhere in Caloocan. I will reserve for another column her gruesome tale of that torture, and her own eyewitness account of rape by Marcos' soldiers, simply because her story deserves to be told.

But all these are very timely now that actor Rez Cortez has started a signature drive to conscript Susan Roces into the political arena. This is very cunning, this plot to delude the people by embellishing somebody in the image of Cory Aquino. Mr. Cortez has probably forgotten that signature drives then were a risky act. That is why those one million signatories for Cory were real brave hearts.

Art truly imitates life, doesn't it Mr. Cortez?

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Re-examining President Roxas

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IF Jose Laurel Sr. was the de facto leader of the civilian government during the war, Manuel Roxas, the first president of independent Philippines, provided an example of charismatic and dramatic leadership. As Roxas put it on Dec. 19, 1946: "Let us stop fighting today's battles with yesterday's weapons."

Roxas, an economist when economics determined many issues of the day, derived a great deal of his success from his being young and brilliant. Filipinos have always admired intellectual brilliance and prefer their leaders to be young and vigorous. (That is why Miriam Defensor-Santiago never fails to remind people of her academic distinctions, and that is why a lot of voters decided not to vote for Jovito Salonga, who was too old when he ran for president.)

Roxas was the wunderkind of the politics of his day, lampooned in cartoons that portrayed him as a little boy in a sailor's suit, presiding over the House (of which he became Speaker at the age of 30). He was a charismatic man, an eloquent speaker, a bar topnotcher. When a coup in the legislature staged against Sergio Osmeña, Roxas and their supporters, ousted Roxas from the speakership, he declaimed that he was falling from his position of power into the arms of his people, and was lustily applauded by the students who packed the gallery.

Unfortunately, Roxas has become something of a nonentity in history. The late columnist I.P. Soliongco noted this when who wrote, in 1957, that "The memory of President Roxas has been forgotten not because the Nacionalistas want it to be so but because history says it must be so. For President Roxas, despite his amazing intelligence and intellectual background, was sadly unaware of the 'historical situation' of his time. Indeed, if the truth be told, what he tried to do was to turn back the clock of history. He dealt with our national problems as if the Philippines were an American colony and Filipinos the most loyal subjects of the United States." Soliongco went on to say that the acts and agreements which marked Roxas' administration—the Bell Trade Act, the Parity Amendment, the Bases Agreement of 1947—constituted "crimes against nationalism."

That Roxas was an American stooge remains the conventional view taught in most schools. With the passage of time, this view could, however, face serious challenge. This can be gleaned from the late Bonifacio S. Salamanca's article in Philippine Studies (Vol. 37, 3rd Quarter, 1989) titled "Quezon, Osmeña, and Roxas and the American Military Presence in the Philippines," which traces the development of the Philippine government's position on American bases. Manuel Quezon had nothing against the naval bases but used the Hare-Hawes-Cutting provision that allowed military bases in the Philippines to whip up support for his "Anti-position" on the law. Roxas and Osmeña defended it. Later on, during World War II, Quezon would change his mind and enter into talks on the possibility of establishing US bases (naval and air) in the Philippines after the war; when he died, Osmeña (who had nothing against the bases anyway) was quite happy to pursue the talks.

And so was Roxas when he became President. He assigned Elpidio Quirino, in his capacity as foreign affairs secretary, to conduct negotiations with the domineering American ambassador, Paul V. McNutt. Salamanca then describes how Roxas and Quirino did a "Good-Cop-Bad-Cop" act, with Roxas as the Good Cop to whom the exasperated McNutt would run whenever Quirino stood up for Filipino interests. The result was an agreement which turned out more favorable to the Philippines. A re-examination of Roxas' presidency could lead to the conclusion that he secured a better deal for the country than might otherwise have been expected; just as Ramon Magsaysay, who continues to be excoriated by the Left, was responsible for the Laurel-Langley Agreement which shortened the duration of the Bases Agreement.

But these things will remain controversial for a long time to come. As chief executive, Roxas delegated power freely, was confident of his own capacity, and was an energetic campaigner. He was the type of leader that admirers of Dick Gordon (and strangely enough, Santiago) can look up to as the prototype of an effective leader, campaigner and executive in the modern age.

* * *

APROPOS of Roxas, reader "Ty Rador" writes, "My apologies to your editorial yesterday (16th) about President Manuel Roxas being the leader of the entire guerrilla activities in the Philippines during the war. My eyeballs must have been scheming your yesterday's article faster that my brains could absorb! I looked for the article again in the archive but could not find it. Again, my apologies.

"Anyway, I have another question; today, you stated that JP Laurel Senior, disapproved of conscripting Filipinos. Who then ordered the conscription of the Philippine Constabulary at that time? These constabularies were recruited from Bataan veterans and some new civilian recruits. Their first contingent were training on the other half of Gomez Elementary School located at Quezon Boulevard/Andalucia St., just across the street from the former house of Andres Narvasa (retired chief justice of the Supreme Court, 1998).

"Like I said, 'I was there.' If responding to your feedback required more background information, I would have gladly provided them.

"However, your article today on 'Divided Loyalties' is one of your best yet."

As far as I know, the Philippine Constabulary was reconstituted during the Japanese Occupation, beginning with the Philippine Executive Commission headed by Jorge B. Vargas.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Long walk to freedom

COMMENTARY

Anwar Ibrahim

TRUE social justice is still a long way off for much of Asia. It is time for leaders to wake up to the demands of their people.

If you were walking out of prison after serving a lengthy term, you would more than likely experience the curious, eerie feeling of stepping into a different time zone, as if you had an internal clock that ran at a slower pace than real time.

As a prisoner, I felt as if the world rolled to a dull, lethargic rhythm. It was a world in which death was more real and more certain. Prisons are built to isolate criminals from the rest of us. And society often forgets its prisoners and their existential situation. Among the forgotten are innocent who, because of corruption or a lapse in the system, are thrown in to share the life of the condemned.

Lapses in the administration of justice can happen anywhere, even in societies claiming the best system humanly possible. But in some societies, the miscarriage of justice has become endemic and is sometimes used as a convenient political tool. My court trials and six-year incarceration, for example, had all the façade of legality and procedural justice, but only for the naive. In essence, the whole saga was just a more sophisticated version of the Moscow show trial.

Aside from political persecution masked by legal procedure, we also have variations of gulags (Soviet forced labor camps) and political prisons, especially in Asia and Africa. It is amazing how stubbornly these camps of shame survive. They certainly serve well the sinister political purposes of those in power.

How many have suffered from a miscarriage of justice? Celebrated victims—the Mandelas and the Suu Kyis—may be remembered and given their place in history, but what happens to the rest? Must they remain faceless and simply disappear?

Hope may be the most irrational of human instincts, but it is what makes us human. To the many who are unjustly incarcerated, it is hope that preserves their humanity. Some hope for justice beyond the grave, and some hope the world will become a better place so that others will not suffer as they have.

I too have such hopes, which I carried with me out of prison, along with my toothbrush and bundle of clothes. When the Supreme Court announced my freedom, I felt a shot of euphoria surging through my veins. But it was a temporary high. As it began to wear off, I realized that although I was free from the cold stares of four gray walls, there were other walls, more insidious, surrounding me and my compatriots. I may be free to socialize with family and friends, but in my mind's ear, I hear the rattle of chains that seek to shackle our thoughts and imagination.

The Asian currency crisis and economic meltdown—the backdrop to my incarceration—are now a distant memory. Thailand and South Korea, among the worst hit by the crisis, are again economic powerhouses. For Indonesia, the crisis was cataclysmic, but it terminated Suharto's military rule, forced open the gate to genuine democracy—the biggest in the Muslim world—and unleashed a free press and a vibrant civil society. The economic crisis of the late 1990s was not without its dividends: there is now some consensus, at least in words if not yet in deeds, that opacity is bad for business—be it the business of governing or the business of making money.

Yet the forces resistant to reform and unfriendly to democracy have not simply surrendered. On the contrary, they have tried to strengthen their positions. The recent decision by the Myanmar junta to extend the house arrest on Aung San Suu Kyi is a case in point. Other countries pay lip service to democracy while their policies ensure that the playing field becomes increasingly uneven. The press remains submissive to the ruling clique, and fundamental liberties are severely curtailed.

One of the dividends of the crisis is that the struggle for freedom has taken on a regional character. The civil society sector is forging regional solidarity for democracy and human rights. The governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—the 10-nation regional grouping—are fearful of this new development and cling stubbornly to their outmoded doctrine of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of member-states.

Asean is replete with internal contradictions. Some of its members—Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand—have made giant leaps into mature democracy. But they have not made a serious effort to influence their less democratic partners, or to put democracy on the Asean agenda. The region's leaders are proud of their tradition of consensual decision-making, but this is the very thing that keeps the group inert, that makes it unwilling to set a standard of democratic governance that it could impose on member-states.

But freedom has a demonstrative effect. Asean leaders must wake up to the reality that democracy is increasingly asserting its presence in the region. The democratic mind is nurtured by social and political activism and by unlimited access to information. We are seeing the birth of an informed "Aseanese" community. It will be increasingly evident to the region's citizens that authoritarianism limits their choices and only democracy is capable of meeting their demand for greater choice. And as the economies of the region become more interlinked, so do the fates of the Asean peoples.

Asean is diverse, but there are fundamental cultural, economic and political meeting points. The desire for wealth is a common motivation, and it has resulted in high economic growth in the region, albeit uneven.

But economic well-being nourishes the desire for greater freedom. Current Asean leaders want to set limits to their cooperation. They should know that they are daydreaming. Deepening economic integration will bring with it many unintended consequences. It is not only the Aseanese desire for democracy, openness and freedom that they will have to grapple with.

It may not be too long before the peoples of the region begin to see themselves as members of a single community. When that happens, the seed of Asean greatness will have been sown.

Anwar Ibrahim is the former deputy prime minister of Malaysia. This article appears in full in Global Agenda, the magazine of the World Economic Forum.

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Maynilad syndicate in extortion scheme?

KUDOS to Neal Cruz for his exposé on the mismanagement of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (PDI, 12/13/04), and to the INQUIRER for its news on the 50-percent increase in Maynilad's water rates. (PDI, 12/5/04)

However, I would like to call attention to one aspect of Maynilad's operation that needs immediate correction. This is its billing system, which is manipulated through the water meters that it issues to consumers. Maynilad has been replacing old meters with new ones that run faster, effectively raising water rates—twice or thrice or even four times over—even before the 50-percent increase was approved by the MWSS. This practice is not only abusive; this is definitely criminally coercive.

Consumers are then sent scandalously "high" billings that Maynilad itself marks "under protest," never mind if no protest has yet been filed. In some instances, Maynilad people replace an old water meter with a tampered one, which they later claim to be broken. Then Maynilad sends billings based on what it calls "average classification" (consumption), because no "reliable" water meter reading can be taken.

If the consumers complain, Maynilad's Revenue Enhancement Directorate accuses them—especially if they are owners of pension houses or establishments that admit boarders or tenants—of tampering the meters and demands outright a "penalty" or "fine" amounting to P200,000 or more. The consumers cannot defend themselves against Maynilad's "words" and unilateral decision of guilt. Either they pay or they will be penalized with a disconnection.

In such instances, it is plain to see that there is no due process. What is clear is the existence of a tyrannical extortion scheme for revenue enhancement. In other words, this is how Maynilad's Revenue Enhancement Directorate raises funds. This clearly runs in conflict with the Arroyo administration's drive against corruption and injustice. President Macapagal-Arroyo should immediately order the proper agencies to look and act on this matter as this involves a public utility that operates practically as a monopoly within its franchise area.

There is the possibility that a syndicate, which has for members meter readers and their managers, is involved in this extortion scheme. And it is possible that the "penalties" collected in the name of Maynilad just go into the pocket of its members.

—JANET YU,
Evangelista Street corner
Arguelles Street,
Makati City

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Distorted logic, baseless optimism

LISTENING to President Macapagal-Arroyo and her financial advisers talk about the economy, one gets the impression that the country is rolling in money.

To gauge the state of the economy on the sales of beer and prepaid cell phone cards is preposterous. Not all beer drinkers have money to spare. Those who are addicted to alcohol will scrape their bottom peso just to support their vice, never mind if there is hardly any food on the table. The same goes for those addicted to texting. They would rather spend money on their cell phones than on more important things.

People in Subic couldn't have disagreed more with the administration's baseless optimism regarding the economy. The last (Christmas) holiday season, (the holidays are usually the peak season for tourism at the freeport), was mostly quiet. One could see that business was slow.

It would be great if we could share the optimism of the President and her financial gurus, but reality is staring us in the face!

—MILAGROS KLEIST,
P.O. Box 005,
Subic Bay Freeport Zone,
Olongapo City 2222

MAGLAKAD
AT
MAG-ABAN
SA
BANGKETA
MMD
MMD

WILL the "wet-flag" drive instill pedestrian discipline? PDI PHOTO

MMDA's senseless scheme

METRO Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando is again on a rampage. The MMDA is into another scheme that is as futile and outrageous as its previous ones.

The MMDA is completely missing the whole picture. Its "drenched-cloth" campaign is not going to instill awareness of traffic rules and regulations among pedestrians. Besides, the MMDA's small number of "wet-flag" trucks cannot possibly patrol every single leg of selected Metro Manila roads, where thousands of commuters flock every day. The moment the MMDA truck leaves, everything will just go back to "normal." Moreover, it violates a person's basic right to be treated with dignity.

Obviously, the scheme does not even consider, among others, the welfare of some commuters who could get to their schools and workplaces wet and dirty because of these soaked rags. Instead of wasting time and resources for ridiculous projects, the MMDA should improve on its traffic enforcement (e.g., implementation of specific and convenient loading and unloading zones).

Also, the MMDA should develop our sidewalks so it will not have any problem making pedestrians use the sidewalks instead of the roadsides. How can it instruct the people to use the sidewalk if there is no sidewalk in the first place? But this entails careful study and not simply abrupt and violent clearing operations. What we need are rational, widely consulted and well thought-out policies, not senseless schemes.

—CARL MARC RAMOTA,
public information officer,
Anak ng Bayan Youth Party,
32-A Visayas Ave., Barangay San
Isidro, Galas, Quezon City

War vs high cost of medicine

ALLOW me to bring to the attention of our concerned government officials the astronomical cost of medicines in our country.

This, I think, is a problem just as serious as the soaring prices of gasoline and other basic commodities because everyone—rich or poor—practically needs medicines.

Every time I go to a drugstore to buy drugs for me and my family, I feel like being robbed in broad daylight by both the drug manufacturers and the drugstore operators, who are definitely making a killing at the expense of our helpless countrymen.

Who should be blamed for this? Naturally, the government must take full responsibility for this mess. How the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Health have become insensitive to the problem simply drives me crazy. People are dying because they cannot afford the cost of medicines. This, the trade and health secretaries should know.

The least that we expect from the DTI and DOH is an explanation as to why the cost of medicines has shot up beyond affordable levels. Sadly, both of them have chosen to remain silent on the issue.

Even our lawmakers, including our party-list representatives who are known to make noise at any given issue or opportunity, have turned a deaf ear on this issue, despite the sad pleas of our people.

The chairpersons of the committees on health in the Senate and the House of Representatives should wake up and take the initiative to, at the very least, investigate the problem.

I think it's high time that President Macapagal-Arroyo does something drastic to roll back drug prices.

In my view, no less than a declaration of war versus the high cost of medicines is necessary to bring it back to affordable and realistic levels.

—WILLIE C. GESITE,
E. Rodriguez Boulevard,
Quezon City

DBM also to blame for NFA's losses

THE RECENT pronouncement of the Department of Budget and Management virtually blaming government-owned and -controlled corporations for our country's worsening budget deficit defies logic.

The National Food Authority, a GOCC, should not be blamed for the fiscal crisis, a product of the government's erroneous economic and financial policies and misplaced priorities.

The DBM is partly to blame for the NFA's losses. It is bad enough that only P900 million has been allotted as the NFA's annual budget in recent years. Worse, the DBM has always been delayed in releasing this subsidy prompting the NFA to borrow from banks at high interest rates in order to fulfill its duties.

The DBM was among those which thought of charging the NFA with import tariffs: a ridiculous scheme in which a government agency (NFA) pays another (Bureau of Customs) to "remedy" rice production shortfalls which, in the first place, are not the making of the NFA. While the NFA paid Customs a staggering P7.6 billion, a superficial portion of Customs' revenue, it suffered the same amount, P7.6 billion, in losses, plus hundreds of millions in interest payments at rates guaranteed by the DBM.

The DBM statement is obviously a prelude to privatize GOCC functions and lessen the government's role in providing basic and essential services. Interestingly enough, the statement is consistent with the recommendations of multilateral financial institutions—World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and USAID.

The DBM statement is also a prelude to the implementation of Executive Order 366 directing the streamlining and restructuring of government agencies. EO 366 is anti-poor: it circumvents the security of tenure of hundreds of thousands of ordinary government workers. The reorganization or privatization of the NFA alone will render an estimated 1,079 employees in the agency jobless and will mean the end for the NFA's direct rice market intervention, the decoupling of its regulatory and marketing functions and the dismantling of its exclusive authority to import rice to answer rice production shortfalls.

The DBM is actually to blame for the rice production shortfall in 2004 and 2005 for reducing the Department of Agriculture's budget for rice production, which is considered the most important economic activity in our country. Rice production contributed 16 percent to agriculture growth in 2004. It employs more than six million workers.

What ought to be done, therefore, is for the NFA's mandate to be strengthened and its functions further expanded for vigorous market participation. The strengthening of the NFA as the government's arm in ensuring food security—not some ill-advised rationalization or privatization plan that only serves as a virus rather than a cure to the disease—is clearly one answer to poverty alleviation.

—ROMAN M. SANCHEZ,
national president,
National Food Authority
Employees Association (NFA-EA),
101 Matimyas Bldg.,
E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue., Quezon City

Life goes on

WHAT embarrasses me as a Filipino are readers like Alex Argote of Iligan City (PDI, 1/8/05) who inflict their self-righteousness on the Opinion page of the INQUIRER. Argote dismissed everyone who took part in the New Year's Eve party in Makati as drunken revelers who had the least care about the recent disasters in Asia.

I was there with my family and my friends and I felt insulted by his sweeping comments. I would like to tell Argote that our family and my friends all donated money for the victims of the flash floods in Quezon. When we learned about the tsunamis and the thousands of victims, we said prayers for them.

We went to Makati to welcome the New Year, safe from firecrackers while enjoying a concert and a fireworks show. How Argote came to the conclusion that all the revelers were drunk escapes me, since he was in Iligan. Your newspaper said 10,000 people were there with us, but was there any incident of violence attributed to drinking? None. Did Argote want us to cancel the New Year's Eve celebrations? It looks that way to me.

Argote seems to lay claim to being the only one sensitive to his surroundings. I dare him to tell us what he did when he learned about the flash floods and the tsunamis. And how did he celebrate New Year's Day? Cloistered in his room watching CNN and crying over the deaths in Aceh or with beer and firecrackers?

We commiserate with the victims of the disasters here in our country and abroad, but life goes on for the survivors and for the rest of us. I suggest Argote also gets a life of his own.

—SUSAN SANTOS,
2768 Buencamino St.,
Barangay Poblacion,
Makati City

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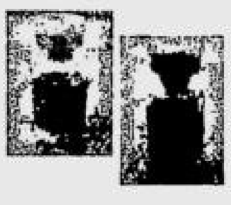
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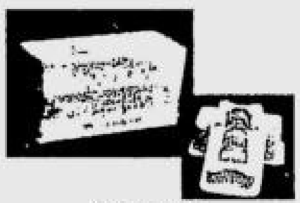
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Vigilantes kill 5 in one day in Davao

DAVAO CITY—A president of a vendors association, two gang members, a laborer, and a cockfight aficionado were killed by suspected vigilantes in separate attacks here Saturday.

The deaths bring to 32 the total number of vigilante-related killings in the city this month.

Police identified the latest victim as Roland Tordel, 33, of Sto. Rosario, Buhangin District.

Tordel and his companion, Eduardo Geronimo, had just left the Buhangin cockpit arena along the Diversion Road at around 8:45 p.m. and were about to board their motorcycle when an unidentified man approached them and shot Tordel twice.

Although wounded, Tordel managed to run, but the gunman caught up with him and finished him off, police said.

At 6:30 p.m., Manuel Bandayanon was also shot and killed along Sta. Ana Avenue.

Bandayanon, 33, a worker of Sulpicio Lines and Shipping Co., was on his way home when two men on board a motorcycle appeared from behind him and shot him twice.

Mamayandang Dima, 50, president of the Muslim-Christian Vendors Association, of Bankerohan, Barangay 5-A, was killed at around 7 a.m.

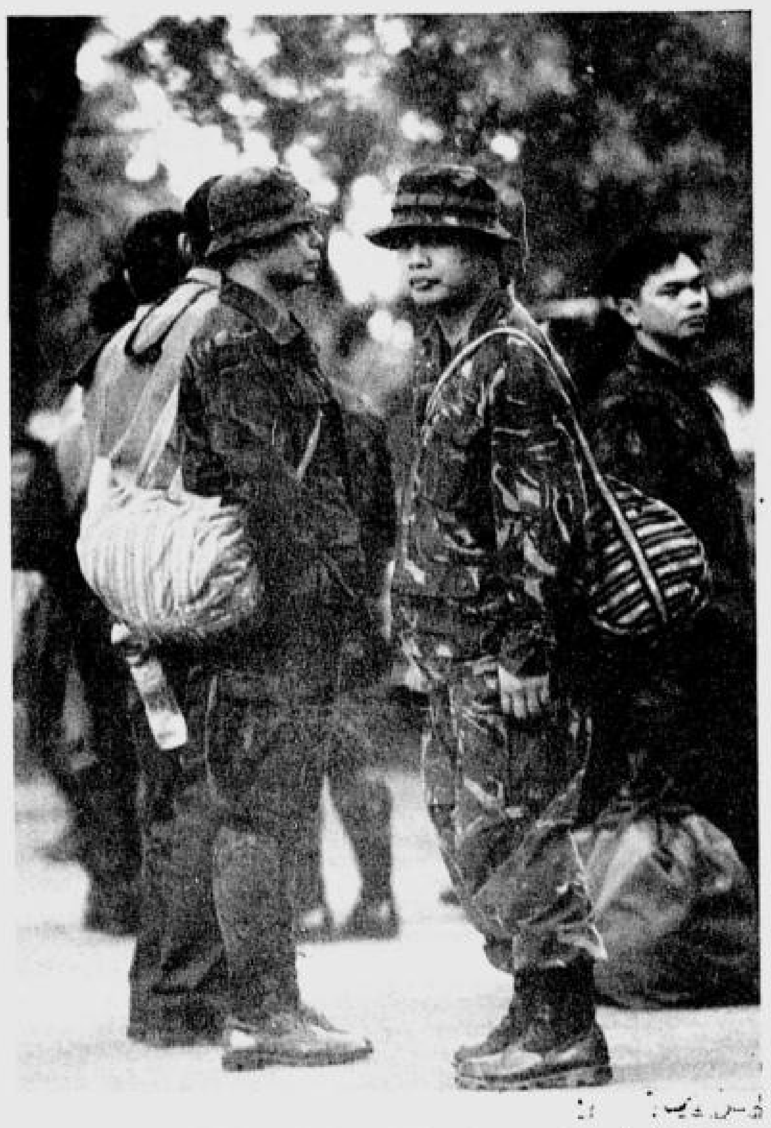
Dima was sitting on a bench when two men riding on a motorcycle shot him.

SPO1 Jay Rueben Plaza, San Pedro police investigator, said Dima's killing could have something to do with his position as vendors association president.

Plaza said it was "remote" that the victim was involved in illegal drugs.

At 12:05 a.m., Jeffrey del Rio, 24, and Lyndon Lumanta, 18, alleged members of the teenage DRB (Disenteng Rugby Boys) Gang, were shot dead along Solid Street, Barangay Wilfredo Aquino, Agdao District.

Reports reaching the Sta. Ana police station said the two, along with other gang members, were walking on the street when two unidentified men alighted from a Nissan van and shot them. *Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



COMPLETE with their native bags, 121 policemen from the Police Regional Office-Cordillera prepare for briefing upon arrival at Camp Macabulos in Tarlac City. The team is to augment local police force in maintaining peace and order in Hacienda Luisita where workers refuse to obey the return-to-work order issued by the Department of Labor and Employment.

Davao workers protest ₱14 wage hike

DAVAO CITY—Workers are calling "token" the recent P14 increase in minimum wage approved by the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB) even as militant groups vowed to mount a series of protests to hasten the passage of a P125 legislated across-the-board increase in Congress.

The board issued a new wage order Tuesday, mandating the increase in minimum wage in the Davao region, which covers the cities of Davao, Digos, the Island Garden of Samal, Panabo and Tagum, the three Davao provinces, and Compostela Valley.

Ma. Gloria Tango, regional director of the Department of Labor and Employment and wage board chair, said the order would raise the minimum wage of non-agricultural and service workers in the region to P209 in urban areas and P207 in rural areas, and the wage level of agricultural workers to P199 and P197 in urban and rural areas, respectively.

But while the management sector representatives in the board appeared satisfied with the increase, the two labor representatives disagreed.

Virginia Camus of the Federation of Free Workers and Jorge Alegarbes of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) called the minimum wage adjustment "grossly inadequate," and way below the living wage in the region.

The TUCP earlier petitioned for a P47 increase in wages.

Omar Bantayan, secretary general of the Kilusang Mayo Uno in Southern Mindanao called the P14 increase a "token" and "insult," and promised to mount protests to pressure Congress to legislate the P125 wage increase.

"It only shows their ignorance about the plight of workers, and justifies our call to abolish the wage board," Bantayan told the INQUIRER.

"We will not accept an increase below P125," he added.

Jeppie Ramada, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan spokesperson for Southern Mindanao, said the real value of current wages had been eroded by 19 percent since 2003, and the cost of living was now P524 per day.

The House bill calling for the P125 wage increase is on its third and final reading, but Bayan and other militant groups said they would launch mass actions for its immediate passage.

Businessmen who sit at the RTWPB feared that the P125 across-the-board wage increase might kill small and medium businesses in the region. *Germelina A. Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Luisita situation a security threat with NPA infiltration, says Army

TARLAC CITY—A military official said the situation inside Hacienda Luisita threatened national security with the "infiltration and support" given by the Communist Party of the Philippines to the ongoing workers' strike there.

Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command, said the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army, "have used the Luisita situation as one of their stepping stones for bigger action."

Dominguez said they recognized the right of the workers to express their grievances but asked them to police their ranks because the CPP-NPA "is taking advantage of the situation."

"We are not for any company; we are also there to protect the workers," he said.

Asked if this security issue would prompt military officials to send soldiers inside the hacienda, Dominguez said they would exercise due protocol if their help was sought by the police.

A report presented by Nolcom officials to reporters on Saturday said the workers' strike at the Cojuangco-family owned Hacienda Luisita was "a handiwork of the CPP-NPA and a culmination of long months of instigation and propaganda work to get the workers rise up in arms against the Cojuangcos."

The groups, the military said, were "capitalizing on the prevailing issues at [Hacienda Luisita] to use it as a staging point to jumpstart a series of protest actions [to] discredit and undermine the government."

The report said the military reached this conclusion through, among others, "field reports" and documents seized during an encounter in Pura town last year.

In this "grand design," the military accused the CPP, NPA and National Democratic Front of "orchestrating" the labor unrest at Luisita and the developments that followed.

Dominguez said the groups "were pressing the right button, capitalizing on the prevailing economic and political conditions, much like what they did during the [1971] Plaza Miranda bombing."

Tension remained high in Hacienda Luisita as striking workers braced themselves for another violent dispersal following the end of the five-day reprieve given by the labor department for them to return to work on Jan. 20.

Some striking workers defied the return-to-work order issued by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas on Jan. 14 but the picket lines remained quiet since Thursday.

The workers, however, gathered stones and sticks and armed themselves with slingshots to prepare for what could be another violent confrontation with policemen. *Jo Martinez-Clemente, Russell Arador and Ronald Dizon, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Lucena senior citizens lament move to scrap drug discounts

LUCENA CITY—The president of this city's senior citizens organization lamented the court action by drugstore owners wanting to contest the legality of the law that grants them 20-percent discount on all medicine purchases.

"Why would they contest it when it was primarily intended to alleviate the hardship of most senior citizens? asked Amado Sarmiento, president of the Lucena City Senior Citizens Association. "That Senior Citizens Act of 2003 is already a law, passed by Congress and signed by the President," he stressed.

He pointed out that almost all drugstores in the city were not honoring the law-mandated discount on medicines for senior citizens. He said some of them only give measly discounts from as low as two percent.

"Now, they want to totally abolish it. How about the welfare of the millions of senior citizens across the country, most of [whom] are poor and could barely afford the high cost of medicines?" Sarmiento asked.

He said he himself was not using his senior citizen's identification card in his regular purchase of medicines. "It's no use as far as the purchase of drugs is concerned," he said.

"But if the country's legislators would abolish the law, we can't do anything except to follow, he said. "But they should have pity on us," Sarmiento said.

On Thursday, small drugstore owners in the country petitioned the Supreme Court to stop the implementation of the law providing 20 percent discount to all senior citizens.

The petitioners were Carlos Super Drug, Advance Drug, City Pharmacy, Botica de la Serna and Leyte Serve Well Drugstore. Carlos Super Drug is based here in Lucena.

The group claimed that the law was forcing small drugstores to increase the prices of their products as the government was reimbursing them only 32 percent of the discount they give.

When the INQUIRER asked how many percent they give to senior citizens in every drug purchase, the sales clerk at the Carlos Super Drug said, "three percent for branded medicines and if all the requirements are complete and only 2 percent if the requirement is not complete." *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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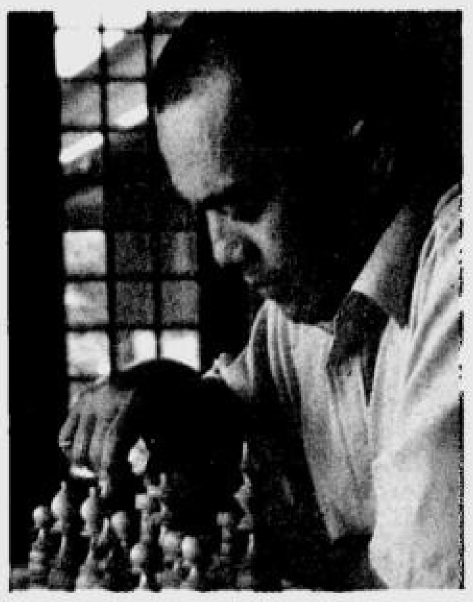

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Brrr! in Tuguegarao

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Residents in this northern city, known to experience the hottest temperature in Cagayan Valley, had to scrounge for the thickest blankets and sweaters when the mercury dipped to 15 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. Stores selling used clothes sold jackets as brisk as these were displayed, even as they increased prices by P50. The elders said the drop in the temperature was a sign of upstream travel of fish fry spawned in the sea. They said they expected to have a bountiful catch of the *ifun* or newly hatched fish, considered a delicacy here. *Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

No water rate hike

OZAMIZ CITY—Policymakers of the government-owned provincial water utility company has called off a planned increase in water rates beginning this month. Oscar Policarpio, board chair of the Misamis Occidental Water District (MOWD), said the rate increase was held in abeyance until June pending the completion of the upgrading of the water delivery systems. Policarpio said it was not wise to impose the increase as consumers had yet to enjoy the benefits of the systems-upgrading program. The MOWD raised water rates by 30 percent over two years ago that started the implementation of its plan to increase rates from P100 for a 10 cubic meter minimum consumption to P250 in seven years. But the rate adjustment program was called off following widespread protests by consumers who complained of bad service. *Ryan Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

New congregation head

COTABATO CITY—The new head of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Philippines is a native of Caloocan City. Fr. Ramon Bernabe said his appointment as the new Oblate superior came on Tuesday, his 41st birthday. He replaced Fr. Federico Labaglay, who has been assigned in Rome as Asia-Oceania general counselor for the congregation. Bernabe, currently the president of the Oblate-run Notre Dame University here, said his elevation was an honor after candidates for the highest post underwent the OMI "selection process" through consultation and holding of a "straw vote." *Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Vehicles for cops

CITY OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE—The city government distributed 12 vehicles to the city police station to be used as mobile patrols and police service cars. Mayor Angelito Sarmiento ordered the release of more than P7 million from the city coffers to buy 12 Toyota Revo vans. Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Central Luzon police director, received the vehicles on behalf of the city police on Monday. The vehicles are equipped with hand-held radio units, megaphones and blinkers. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

1 dies in Cebu fire

CEBU CITY—A man was charred to death in Thursday's fire that razed six houses in Tabada, Mambaling, this city. Edgar Alinton, 54, was trapped inside his room on the second floor of his mother's burning house. Firemen found Alinton's 4-year-old daughter, Maymay, at the living room and brought her to safety. It was not still known what caused the fire, which started at Alinton's house at 10:53 a.m. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Fake NBI agent charged

CITY OF CALAPAN—A man who introduced himself as Monsour Lopez, allegedly a National Bureau of Investigation confidential agent, was arrested by NBI-Calapan agents at about 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, at the DWRJ Restaurant in Barangay Salong here. NBI-Calapan office chief Mario Minor identified the suspect as Joseph Falejo, in his 50s, who tried to extort from Sarah Madrigal, 20, of Barangay San Antonio here. Madrigal, who works in Japan, said Falejo had told her that her papers were fake, threatened her and asked for 20 *lapad* (Japanese money) amounting to P100,000. The NBI said Falejo denied the complaints, claiming he was a businessman. Falejo is now at the provincial jail and charged with usurpation of authority and extortion. *Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Free housing for 200

SANTIAGO CITY—The city government and the Gawad Kalinga Foundation have chosen at least 200 families here as beneficiaries of the free housing program that will be implemented this year. Mayor Amelita Navarro said P2.5 million was initially earmarked for the program in which 100 families would be given free lots and houses in Barangay Balintocatoc here. Another 100 low-cost housing units for poor families will be funded by Santiago natives working abroad. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Court ousts councilor

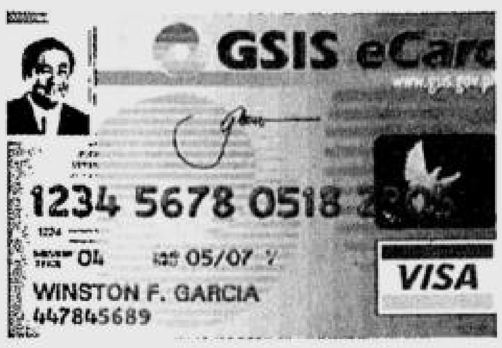
URDANETA CITY—The top councilor of Manaoag, Pangasinan, was ousted from his post for being ineligible to run in the May 10, 2004 elections. Judge Joven Costales of the regional trial court here on Wednesday ordered Councilor Kim Mikael Amador, 25, removed from the Manaoag town council. Court records showed that Amador filed his certificate of candidacy on Jan. 5, 2004. However, his name had been deleted from the voters' list for failure to vote in the last two elections before 2004. Amador filed a petition before the municipal trial court on Dec. 30, 2003 for his reenlistment as a voter, which the court granted. But Costales said the decision of the MTC came seven days after the Jan. 5, 2004 deadline for the filing of the certificates of candidacy. Amador topped the race for councilor, but this did not erase the requirement that he must be a registered voter at the time he filed his COC, Costales said. *Peter La. Julian, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Members rush to GSIS-Naga office for e-card

By Juan Escandor Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

NAGA CITY—Since Jan. 7, the office of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) here has been unusually full of members applying for e-card, although they still have up to May 7 to apply and be issued the document.

"It's the initial deposit of P5,000 that made the members rush to apply for the e-card even though they have enough time to do it within a four-month period," Delia Saltarin, GSIS Loans and Claims Division chief in Naga, pointed out.



Saltarin said the initial deposit was not a giveaway but a loan that a member would pay at P188 per month for 36 months.

The e-card project was first implemented among the employees of GSIS in July last year.

It replaces the old ID system, serves as an automated teller machine (ATM) card, and can be used as a credit card to buy commodities.

Saltarin said the e-card system had worked so efficiently in reducing the number of transactions that the GSIS management decided to expand its coverage to all active members late last year.

The e-card system is a joint undertaking of the Union Bank of the Philippines and the GSIS, she said. Activating an account needs logging into and registering at the websites of the two institutions, she added.

Saltarin said the rush to get hold of the e-card came in the heels of complaints from members about the alleged slow processing of their applications by the GSIS.

But she said the GSIS had already instructed all active members to claim their e-cards at the Ibalon Centrum for Recreation in Legazpi City, the designated center where the e-card making and validating machines have been installed.

To apply for e-cards, GSIS members are advised to submit applications in their respective offices.

The GSIS office in Naga serves some 30,000 active members in the two Camarines provinces and the cities of Naga and Iriga.

While the GSIS office in Legazpi covers members from Albay and Catanduanes, the office in Sorsogon City takes care of members from Sorsogon and Masbate.

Saltarin said the respective offices had been tasked with pre-validating the personal databases of active member-applicants. The clearance will qualify them for e-card issuance, she said.

She said one of the most important requirements was the absence of arrears payable to the GSIS within the three-month period upon the filing of application.

At the end of the four-month period application allotted for Bicol, the GSIS members could only apply and be issued the e-cards through the main office in Manila.

Saltarin said the e-card system improved efficiency and was convenient to users because all loan releases could now be withdrawn through electronic system.

"Without bringing cash, one can shop and give the e-card to the cashier to swipe on the electronic system to pay all the commodities bought," she said.

Some people have, however, complained of difficulty in getting application forms for the e-card, and having to access the documents through the Internet.

4 DENR men hurt in attack in Tarlac

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Four employees of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources were wounded when their group was attacked on Saturday by armed men reportedly employed by a suspected illegal logger in San Jose town in Tarlac.

Avelino Bacallo, chief of the forest management unit of the community environment and natural resources office in Tarlac City, identified the victims as forester Benny Transfiguracion, forest rangers Solomon Balot and Salvador Principe, and Bantay Kalikasan volunteer Florante Catacutan.

They were taken to the Tarlac Provincial Hospital in Tarlac City.

Mahogany

Bacallo, who was reached by phone from the hospital, said Principe and Catacutan were still in serious condition. Both of them suffered bullet wounds in different parts of their bodies.

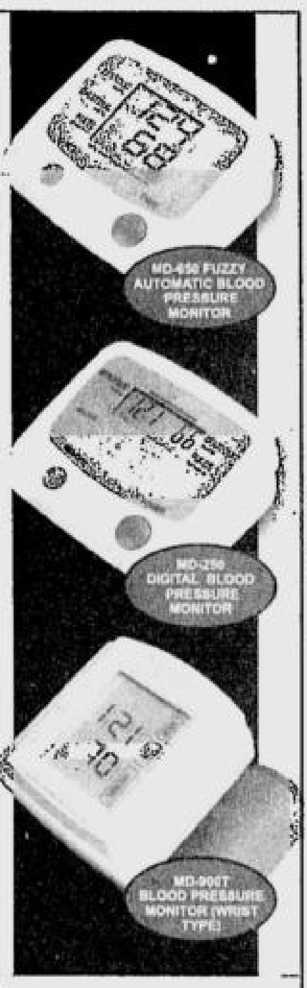
Bacallo said the incident happened at about 7 a.m. after his team accosted several men in Sitio Pisapungan, Barangay Sula.

The men, he said, were hauling to the roadside about 1,000 board feet of freshly cut mahogany lumber.

Gunfire

He said the men ran away, forcing the DENR personnel, who were riding in a Toyota Tamaraw van, to pursue them.

Bacallo said his group were met with gunfire when their vehicle reached a bend on the road. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



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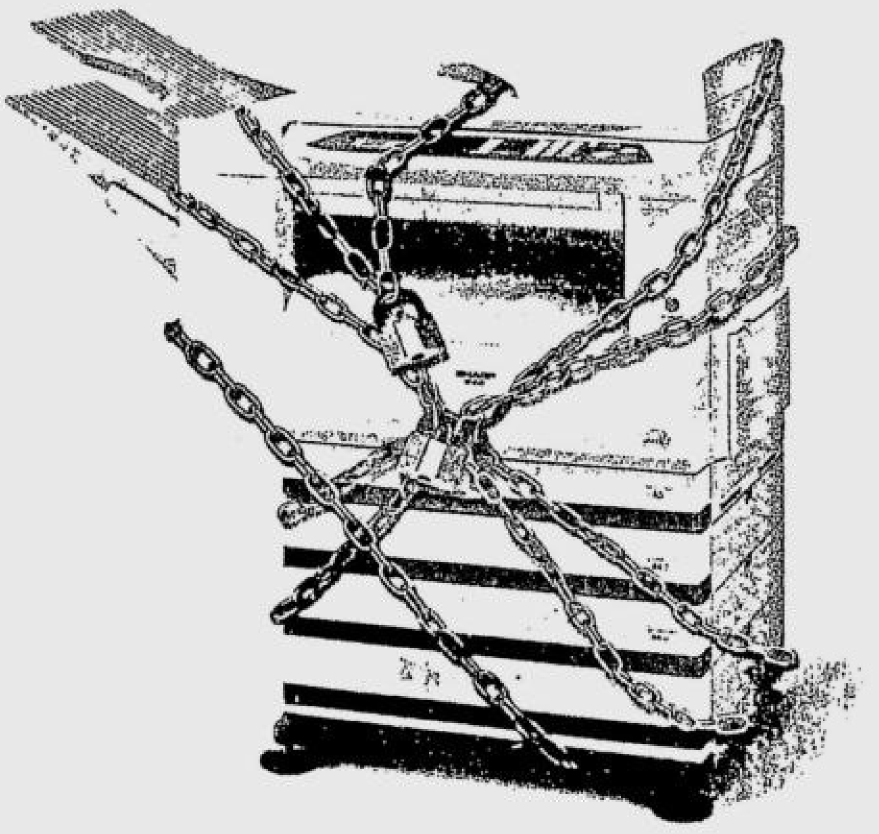

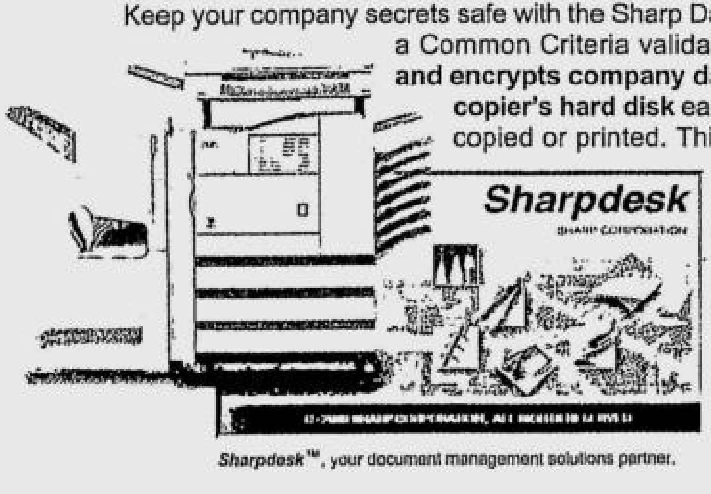

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3 suspected meningo cases reported in Mt. Province

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PARTICIPANTS show their wares during the street dancing festival at Mena Crisologo Street in Vigan City Saturday.

BAGUIO CITY—Three new cases of possible meningococcemia disease were reported in Mt. Province last week, according to Dr. Luningning Villa, chief of the emerging and reemerging diseases unit of the Department of Health.

Villa said the cases were reported on Jan. 18 and 19 and involved patients in different towns of Mt. Province. They were confined in hospitals in the area.

Villa said the patients showed symptoms of meningococcal disease (meningococcemia and meningococcal meningitis) but doctors and DOH personnel were still confirming if the patients were indeed suffering from the fatal disease.

DOH records showed that the Cordillera, including Baguio, recorded 81 cases of confirmed and suspected meningococcal disease.

Baguio recorded 38 cases since October, 11 of which were recorded this month. Villa said the cases in Mt. Province do not yet have laboratory confirmation.

An international team from the World Health Organization and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network were expected to go to Mt. Province and Ifugao to look at the cases and see if the bacteria causing the meningococcal diseases share the same strain found in Baguio.

Villa said symptoms for meningococcemia are abrupt onset of fever, reddish-purple pinpoint rashes and spots, and drop in blood pressure or shock. Symptoms for meningococcal meningitis are fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck, discomfort when looking at light and drowsiness.

Villa urged Baguio residents not to be complacent as the number of cases continues to drop.

"Even if we are seeing a decline in the number of cases, we still cannot be complacent. We must continue to be vigilant," Villa said.

Dr. Florence Reyes, chief of the Baguio Health Department, reiterated that fruits, vegetables and flowers sold in the city are safe from meningococcemia-causing bacteria.

She reminded consumers that the bacteria that cause meningococcal diseases thrive only on humans and not on inanimate things and animals. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Vigan celebrates longganiza fest

VIGAN CITY—Tourist areas in Northern Luzon are making hay while Baguio City's tourism suffers because of the meningococcemia scare. For this Ilocos Sur City, it is a case of making *longganiza* (native sausages).

Vigan's Longganiza Festival held on Saturday drew thousands more viewers compared to last year's staging of the festival.

Mayor Ferdinand Medina said many of the tourists and participants in various conventions who timed their stay for the festival here were supposed to go to Baguio for the weekend but chose to come here instead.

About 20,000 residents and tourists lined Vigan's main streets, including the historic Crisologo Street, to watch dancers wearing replicas of Vigan *longganiza* as fashion accessories.

Medina said only about 10,000 people attended last year's festival.

The *longganiza* festival marked the start of the festivals in Northern Luzon. Among the forthcoming festivals in the region are the Panagbenga or Baguio Flower Festival, the *tabako* festival in Candon City and Pista'y Dayat (sea festival) in Pangasinan.

Members of the United Architects of the Philippines, who usually hold their conventions in Baguio, were among the tourists in the area. Medina also said study tours to the city increased recently.

Vigan also expects to attract tourists from Taiwan and China for the Chinese New Year festivities in early February.

"They usually just come here, take a tour and leave," Medina said.

He said the plan was to give this particular set of tourists a package that would point out that the city used to be a Chinese enclave before becoming the Spanish *encomienda* (forerunner of the town).

Medina said the festival is a big boost in giving recognition to the Vigan *longganiza*, the most popular product of this city.

Part of this year's festivities is the *longganiza* packaging contest. Medina said the city government would adopt the winning package for its sausage industry.

He said the city is planning to finance a feed mill because backyard piggeries here could not compete with commercial facilities due to expensive animal feed.

The other crucial ingredients in the making of Vigan *longganiza*—Ilocos vinegar and garlic—are also getting a boost from the increased demand, he said.

Medina said before the tourism slump in Baguio, Vigan was just a tourist spot, not a tourist destination.

The Vigan Heritage Village is part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Heritage List.

"We plan to make Vigan an alternative convention city," Medina said. *Frank Cimatu and Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Kiss fest in Baguio in February

BAGUIO CITY—Trust tourism and local officials to do everything to help this city recover its reputation as one of the country's top destinations following the meningococcemia scare.

In February, the month of love and hearts, tourism officials will stage a kissing contest and a mass wedding ceremony to prove to visitors that the city is safe from the disease.

"We are planning a mass wedding to highlight Feb. 14 and make Baguio the city of honeymooners as it once was," said Purificacion Molintas, Department of Tourism Cordillera director.

Molintas said the kissing contest, which would be opened to newly weds, would help project the fact that meningococcemia should not be feared.

The disease is spread through prolonged and direct contact with an infected person or through respiratory droplets released through coughing and sneezing.

Some members of the Hotels and Restaurants Association of Baguio will offer discounts in hotel room rates for newly wed couples and other visitors, Molintas said.

Peter Ng, owner of Hotel Supreme, said he would offer a 50-percent discount in his hotel as a gift package to newly wed couples and visitors.

Molintas said the DOT is expecting shopping malls and restaurants to also offer discounts to their patrons to attract tourists and residents.

Mayor Braulio Yaranon said these special packages and rates are "thanksgiving offers" as the city survived the effects of meningococcemia.

She said many employees in tourism-related establishments have gone on leave due to the 90-percent drop in tourist arrivals here starting January.

A Department of Health advisory assured residents and visitors that there is a low risk of developing the disease from activities like going to the city market, tours and festivities.

It said daily normal activities in the city should not be changed and there was no reason to ban travel to the city.

Yaranon advised Molintas that the annual Baguio Flower Festival or Panagbenga would proceed as planned next month.

The mayor said they were confident tourists would still come and participate in the festival, a major crowd drawer in the city.

"We are getting calls even from lowlanders, like Muntinlupa, Dagupan and (other parts of) Central Luzon for their participation in the parade and other activities," Yaranon said.

The local Chinese-Filipino community will also celebrate the Spring Festival on Feb. 11, with the famous Chinese dragon and lion dances as the event's highlight, Ng said.

"Spring means a new beginning. This will mark the new beginning for Baguio. It is very symbolic. The solar calendar, the New Year, started very badly. But this will change with the Chinese New Year," Ng said. *Donna Demetillo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Residents belie claims on Lipa dump

LIPA CITY—This city's open dump has already been closed, according to Lipa City administrator Pedrito Martin Dijan Jr.

Dijan's statement was made in reaction to the plan of Earth Day Network Philippines, an environment group chaired by former environment secretary Elizea Gozun, to sue Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto if she failed to fulfill her earlier promise to close the city's open dump.

"We closed the San Isidro dump on Jan. 5," Dijan said. "That closure had been planned as early as September last year based on R.A. 9003. Last September, the information drive to close that dump was already spread all over Lipa."

Republic Act 9003 is the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Dijan added that the city government even held a concert for its fund drive to raise money to buy equipment for waste segregation, composting, and recycling.

"The San Isidro dump is now close and under rehabilitation because that was Mayor Vi's plan, together with the environmentalist groups here in Lipa City," Dijan added.

A resident of Barangay San Isidro, however, said the dump had not yet been closed.

"Although there were pamphlets that were issued by the city hall in December saying that it would be closed, no action has been done to close it. The barangay is supposed to be responsible for the garbage collection but since they [were] not ready, *wala rin, mabaho pa rin ang* Lipa (nothing has been done yet; Lipa still stinks)."

Another source said garbage collection has stopped since December 2004 after the city hall announcement that the residents should segregate their garbage.

"So we segregated our garbage. But the garbage collectors have not collected since December 2004," the source said.

"And how can there be effective segregation when there are no facilities in Lipa for waste segregation?" the source asked.

He said most residents of Lipa have resorted to burying their garbage, which could result in water contamination. Others have gone to open burning, which is polluting the air.

"Others have solved their garbage problem by taking their garbage to their workplaces because their companies have garbage collectors," he added. *Mei Magsino-Lubis, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Environment exec who issued tree-cutting permit suspended

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—A local environment officer here who issued the controversial permits to cut hardwood species had been ordered suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Elpidio Simon, the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (Cenro) of this city, was ordered suspended effective Jan. 19, according to Southern Leyte Rep. Roger Mercado.

Mercado said he sought for Simon's suspension as the latter is a subject of a congressional inquiry for issuing a Private Land Timber Permit in November last year despite a total log ban imposed on the province following the massive flooding and landslides that hit Panaon Island and other areas in Southern Leyte in December 2003 that left at least 154 people dead.

Mercado said he had asked the DENR to suspend Simon until the House Committee on Environment, chaired by Butuan Rep. Leovigildo Banaag, completes its investigation.

Simon had been summoned to appear before the committee on Wednesday, Mercado said. Also invited to the committee hearing were Maasin City Mayor Damian Mercado, provincial police director Senior Supt. Alfredo Sabornido, Army's 43rd Infantry Battalion commander Lt. Col. Raul Farnacio, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources officer Rodulfo Jaca and Barangay Gawisan chair Lucia Mayorca.

The congressional inquiry stemmed from Mercado's privilege speech on Jan. 18 calling for the investigation of Simon and to define the policy on permits to cut trees in private land.

Simon was in hot water after he issued a permit to cut eight molave and narra trees to landowner Renato Magallanes, on behalf of lumber consignee Nerio Cepada, in Barangay Gawisan, which the Mines and Geosciences Bureau has declared a calamity area after it was found sinking due to sinkholes and illegal logging.

He charged Magallanes P27,800 in permit fees. The permit was issued Nov. 19, 2004 with an expiration date of Dec. 20.

Simon had explained that the cutting of narra trees had been allowed again by then Environment Secretary Elizea Gozun.

He said it was true that the cutting of narra trees were prohibited again after landslides and mudslides struck the three Southern Leyte towns on Panaon Island on Dec. 19, 2003, which killed about 150 people.

"But when [Environment] Secretary Michael Defensor assumed [office], he lifted the ban on the cutting of narra trees, Simon claimed.

Mercado, however, said Simon was lying. "Secretary Defensor has issued a total log ban in the aftermath of the calamity in Luzon provinces in December and his issuance of the permit was still covered by Defensor's memorandum addressed to all DENR regional and provincial offices," he said.

Photojournalist's murder suspect hurt in Jolo clash

ZAMBOANGA CITY—One of the suspects in the murder of photojournalist Gene Boyd Lumawag has been wounded in a clash with government soldiers in Jolo, Sulu on Jan. 15.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said Abu Sayyaf member Itting Sailani, one of those tagged as the gunmen in the killing of Lumawag on Nov. 12 last year, was wounded in an encounter with members of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 9 (MBLT9) in Bus-bus, Jolo.

"Since one of the killers is wounded, they cannot go far, we will soon catch them," the Southcom chief added.

Meanwhile, veteran photojournalist Rene Lumawag, Gene Boyd's father, has requested NBI Director General Reynaldo Wycoco to conduct a "parallel investigation" on the killing of his son.

Wycoco told Lumawag and local media here to give the police ample time to solve the case.

He said the NBI will conduct a "parallel investigation" upon the request of the family to augment the speedy solution of the case.

Another attack

In Legazpi City, two still unidentified suspects fired shots at a radio station, situated at corner David and J. Pimentel Streets of Daet town in Camarines Norte, early Friday morning.

Zaldy Abraham, Bombo Radyo station's security guard, said he heard several gunshots at around 1 a.m. and saw two men immediately leaving the scene riding a red motorcycle as he got out.

Abraham wasn't able to get the license plate of the vehicle.

The investigating body, led by Daet police chief Antonio Freyra, recovered six empty shells of cal. 45 bullets from the scene.

Motive

Ivy Consuelo-Garcia, acting news director of the station, said they were still looking for a motive for the attack.

"As of now, we have no immediate suspect but we are thinking that the past exposés we did on different irregularities here in Daet could have motivated the suspects, or the masterminds, to commit such act," she said.

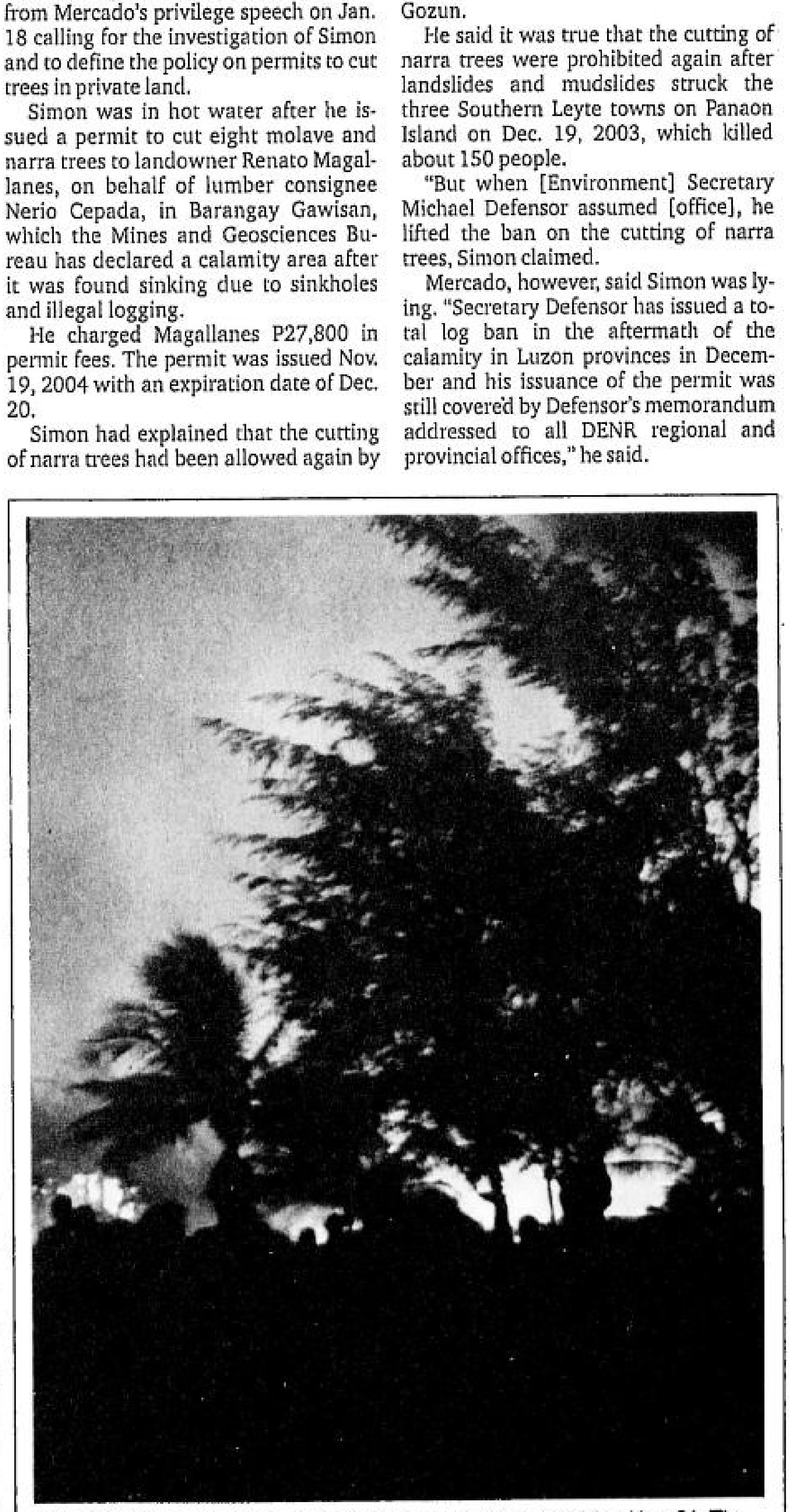
Garcia said the station recently exposed several anomalies in Camarines Norte, including the prevalence of illegal fruit game machines, the controversy involving some Bureau of Treasury employees and the simultaneous filing of leave of ten heads of offices of the local government unit of Mercedes town from Jan. 11-14.

"This is the first time that our station became a target of harassment," Garcia said.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines has condemned the attacks on journalists and media entities.

The latest incident that the NUJP hit was the burning of a broadcast van of the ABS-CBN on Jan. 11 in Mandaluyong City.

Nobody was hurt in the incident, but the group called on the media to take steps to prevent possible attacks on its members. *Julie Alipala with a report from Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Jed Ll. Bacason with report from Michael Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



TOURISTS are silhouetted as they watch a fire on Boracay island Jan. 21. The fire broke out at one of the stalls in Boracay's main market, which supplies almost all the 124 major hotels and resorts with fresh food, police said. REUTERS

Pinoy worker reported missing in Saudi Arabia

A FILIPINO worker in Saudi Arabia has been reported missing and the Philippine government has alerted authorities in the kingdom, an official in Manila said Sunday.

Suelito Leong's co-worker called the Philippine Embassy on Jan. 18 to report Leong missing, said Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilbert Asuque.

Leong, 40, works for a telecommunications company in Riyadh city. He has not been heard from since his employer asked him to pick up plane tickets about 40 km from their office on Jan. 11, Asuque said.

The car he was driving was also missing, Asuque said.

The embassy has informed the Saudi foreign ministry and police of the report, Asuque said.

"There are no leads at the moment," he said.

Leong's family in Davao City fears that he may have been abducted, ABS-CBN television reported. No reason was given for their concern.

Filipino engineer Robert Tarongoy remains a hostage in Iraq after gunmen stormed a Saudi company's Baghdad compound on Nov. 1, abducting him, an American, a Nepalese and three Iraqis. Other captives were released later, but Tarongoy and the American are still in captivity.

Filipino diplomat Angelito Nayan and two other UN workers were kidnapped in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, on Oct. 28. They were freed after negotiations. Afghan officials said the kidnappers were either common criminals or were working for a Taliban-linked group that claimed responsibility for the abductions.

In July, US and Australian officials strongly criticized President Macapagal-Arroyo after she caved in to Iraqi kidnappers' demands and withdrew a small group of Filipino peacekeepers early to secure the release of a Filipino truck driver.

AP

Administration . . .

From page A1

bridled people could be dangerous to political stability and continuity, and a double-bladed weapon that could cut both ways, including her own neck.

Since Ms Arroyo was the foremost beneficiary of Edsa II, whose chief victim was President Joseph Estrada, who was deposed in the midst of his elected term by people power, her change of tone appears to have been dictated by the realization that if she continued to extol people power, she would be stoking the embers of popular discontent.

So, in an interview with dzEC and Net 25 stations owned by Iglesia ni Cristo, which prior to the May election had been hostile to Ms Arroyo but supportive of Estrada, the President gave people power a new slant.

It was Net 25 which fanned unrest over the arrest of Estrada after he had been charged with plunder and which intensified agitation inflaming mobs to attack Malacañang on May 1, 2001.

The more friendly relationship between the President and INC, which backed her in the May election, tilting the campaign in her favor, reflects the shifting nature of political alliances that followed the election.

Shift in definition

In the interview, Ms Arroyo called for a "new kind of people power" whose energy would be diverted away from street action and toward support for her programs.

With this diversion, the real meaning of people power, expressed by Edsa I, has been changed and Ms Arroyo has now more or less accepted the perspective, held by more independent and nonpartisan quarters, that people power, if overused and abused, could be synonymous to mob rule, coup by the street and extra-constitutional ways of political leadership change.

In giving people power a new meaning that discounts its function as an instrument of political liberty—which was the spirit that imbued Edsa I—the President reflected the trauma over coups that has plagued her since the May 1, 2001 storming of the Palace by the horde of Estrada supporters.

She seems fully aware that what was used in deposing Estrada could equally be used to depose her, despite the fact that she had won an electoral mandate in the last presidential election.

By lowering the profile of the commemoration of people power, the President was motivated by self-interest and regime survival, with the latter being the most important consideration that defines the nature of her elected administration.

3 facts

The shift in the definition of people power has, in effect, made people power a dirty word, associated with coups and political instability, and makes it unmentionable in her administration's new political vocabulary.

The President made a shift in definition against the background of three facts.

First, approval ratings of her performance in public opinion polls had been falling and might lead to a free fall.

Second, public discontent over increasing high prices of basic commodities and services, has been rising.

Third, there are more than enough disgruntled opponents of her administration fueling unrest and coup scenarios and conspiracies with these grievances feeding on widespread discontent.

The Filipinos' experience with people power as an agent of political change has failed to live up to their expectations after the euphoria over the overthrow of the Marcos regime in 1986 and of the Estrada administration in 2001.

Their frustrations have been fed by the failure of successor reform governments to first, alleviate poverty, second, improve living conditions, and third, install more efficient and honest governments.

So, it is not in the interest of the Arroyo administration to celebrate people power anniversaries and to perpetuate the myth that people power inaugurates new eras of change and reform.

New myth

By downsizing expectations from people power, the Arroyo administration has to replace people power with new myth behind which Filipinos can be mobilized for political action that could fulfill their aspirations.

The new administration has not formulated a new mobilization ideology and program.

What it has done over the six months is that it has countered threats to regime stability and survival through a web of shifting political alliances that has kept opponents at bay with political concessions to get them behind reform initiatives that address critical problems—such as the fiscal deficit crisis—with half-way tax reform legislative package.

Since the administration does not have inexhaustible assets to sustain temporary alliances, it will soon run out of resources to maintain these alliances with payoffs.

The need for allies to ensure regime survival defines the whole strategic thrust of the second Arroyo administration.

The thrust has been characterized by ad hoc improvisation and avoidance of head-on attack of issues of political and fiscal reforms.

Edsa celebrations have outlived their usefulness as a diversionary tranquilizer to fob off popular expectations arising from people power-driven political change.

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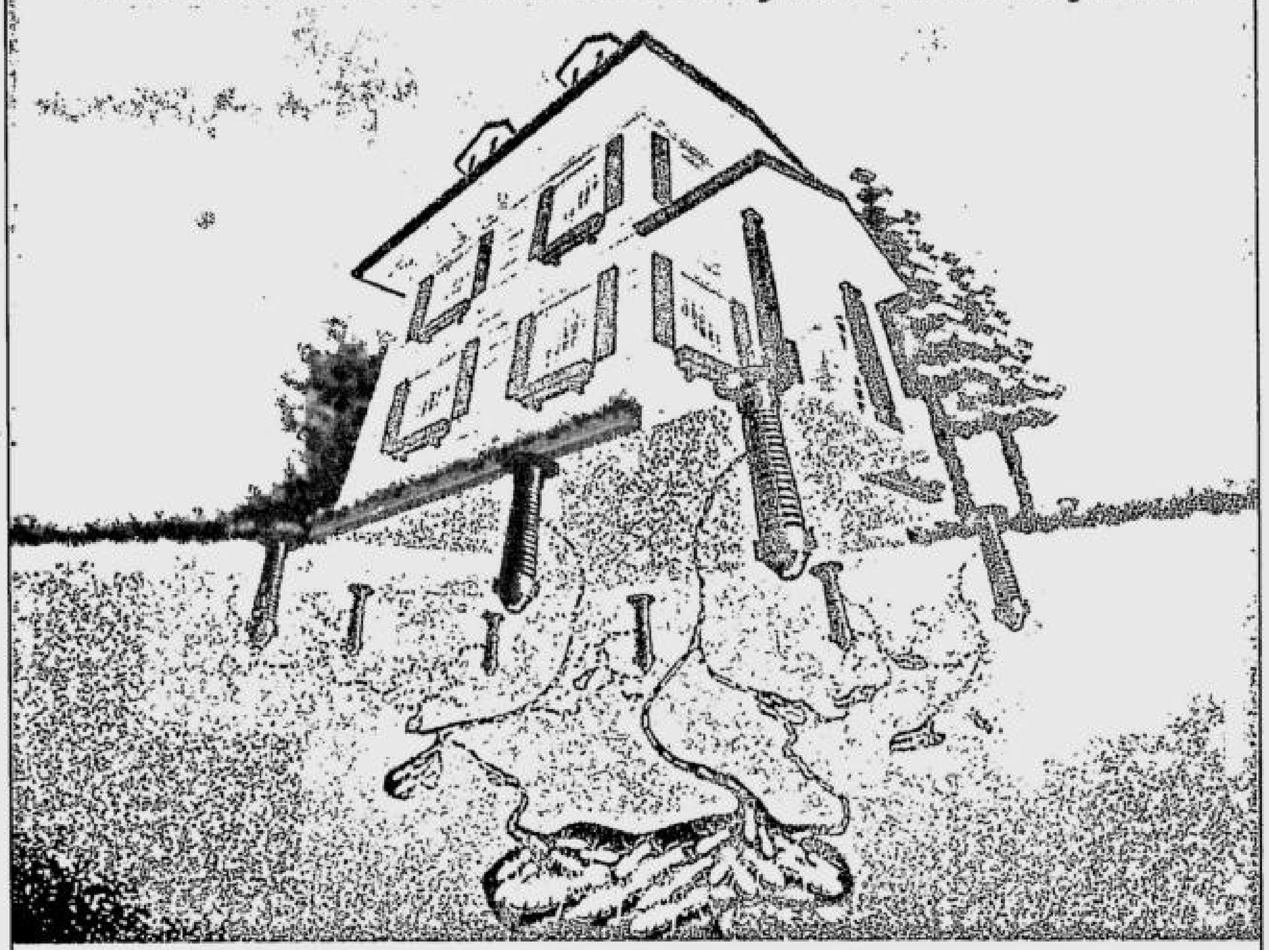

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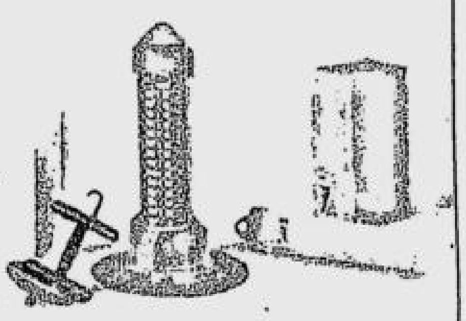

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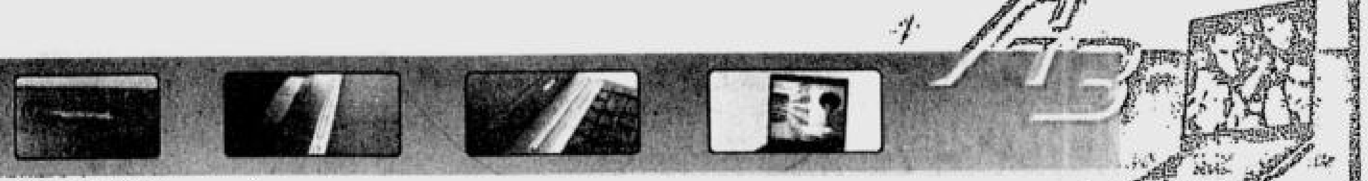

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DENR forest guards to become 'Special Cafgus'

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

TARLAC CITY—Anticipating more violent incidents to erupt while defending what remained of the country's seven million hectares of forest lands, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor on Sunday announced a plan to issue guns to at least 3,000 forest guards.

"Special Cafgus (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit)," was how retired Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag, head of Task Force Sagip Kalikasan, described the armed rangers. Dagudag was referring to the civilian volunteers of the Armed Forces.

But Dagudag said arming the forest guards would not mean that Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel would also perform military or police duties.

Forest guards, he said, would undergo training in marksmanship before they are given assignments.

Defensor said he saw the need to immediately send them to Quezon, Kalinga, Apayao, Agusan, Davao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao where illegal logging is rampant.

"I want our people to be prepared in confronting illegal logging activities," he said.

Dagudag, he said, had started consulting with Director General Edgar Aglipay, the Philippine National Police chief, and Gen. Efren Abu, Armed Forces chief of staff, on the plan.

Defensor said the DENR's armory would initially accept firearms confiscated by the police and the military.

Of the 3,000 forest guards, 1,000 are women. At least 1,000 are aged 60 years and above, while the rest are in their 30s and 40s.

Defensor said since the 1960s, the DENR had been dealing with *kaingeros* (slash-and-burn farmers) and educating them on the environmental destruction the farming practice wrought.

Recently, however, he said the rangers had confronted a more difficult enemy: loggers with guns and money.

He said it was important to protect what was left of the country's mountain cover to prevent more killer landslides and flash floods from occurring.

Aside from arming forest rangers, Defensor said the agency had asked Congress to increase its financial capability.

"The battle is difficult," he said.

Last Saturday's ambush of nine DENR personnel and volunteers in Tarlac signaled the start of similar violent incidents, he said. ***(See story in Across the Nation, Page A19.)***

Defensor said the agency's forest protection budget this year is only P69 million. "That means a measly sum of P4 for every hectare of forest."

Forest protection and re-greening eight million hectares more would entail P60 billion under the DENR's medium-term development plan, he said.

Forester Avelino Bacallo said he hoped the amount would give additional transportation allowances to forest rangers. They get only P50 monthly, he said.

Insurance, according to him, was a minimum P8,000.

On Sunday, Bacallo was on the verge of tears over the wounding of forest ranger Salvador Principe and Bantay Kalikasan volunteer Florante Catacutan.

But Catacutan, a farmer, said he felt fulfilled that he had done his part to protect San Jose town where they were attacked while pursuing employees of a suspected illegal logger.

Defensor asked the military and the police to arrest the suspected illegal logger, Lupito Lapusan, reportedly a former New People's Army commander.

Mike to Jamby: Shut up

From page A1

heavy flooding and landslides in Quezon, Aurora and Nueva Ecija last November and December that left more than 1,000 people dead. The hearing will be conducted by the Senate environment committee chaired by Sen. Pia Cayetano.

Coming to the defense of his colleague, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the environment secretary was "shooting a mouthful that he will regret later on."

"I don't think that even assuming his allegations to be true, the sin of the parents should be visited upon the children," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

The Senate minority leader surmised that Defensor was speaking more out of anger than (speaking) rationally as was expected of a department secretary. "If (Defensor) persists on that kind of rhetoric, then obviously he does not deserve the high position he is occupying," Pimentel said.

Ignorance of laws

In pressing the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to name the big-time illegal loggers responsible for the flash floods in Quezon and Aurora, Madrigal and the fisherfolk group Pamalakaya betrayed their ignorance of the laws on illegal logging, according to Defensor.

"For illegal loggers to be charged, they must be caught in possession (of the hot logs)," he said.

"We are still in the middle of building our case against (the big-time illegal loggers), that's why I didn't want to name names," he added.

Defensor said that when the task force announced on Friday the alleged involvement of General Nakar Mayor Hernando Avellaneda and several other local officials in illegal logging, he had said the initial success was a prelude to the filing of charges against big-time operators.

Media posturing

He also criticized Madrigal's alleged empty posturing in the media.

Speaking in Filipino, Defensor said: "I slept in Quezon for a week. She came once, landing in a helicopter, got her photographs taken. Then, it's all over. I told her, 'I go beyond media.'"

"I just don't go to Quezon for one day and get my pictures taken and then criticize people who are doing their jobs and ensuring that illegal loggers go behind bars," he said.

Defensor said the senator did not have the moral high ground to speak out against the mining industry as being detrimental to the environment because she herself owned a mining firm.

"Why is [Madrigal] angry now and saying that mining is not good for the environment?" the secretary asked. Madrigal's family had "earned big" in the mining business, he said.

Solid Cement

He noted that the senator owned Solid Cement and Consolidated Mines.

When the INQUIRER asked for copies of documents showing Madrigal's stake in the companies, Defensor said: "If the Senate will ask me to present the documents, I'm willing to present these."

He said he hoped that his going public on the business interests of Madrigal and her family would serve a good purpose.

"Perhaps because of my statements the senator would have a different tack and be more careful rather than be destructive to our campaign," Defensor said.

Attacks on forest guards

His family, he said, was neither into logging nor mining. His support for mining, he said, was because of the "national interest."

Defensor's resentment seemed to come from frustration that the task force and the DENR were not getting recognition for their efforts against illegal logging despite attacks on forest guards.

"I just came from (San Jose), Tarlac where three of our people—a forester, a forest guard and a volunteer—were shot at (by suspected illegal loggers). We also have a forest guard shot in Davao last November," Defensor said. ***(See story in Across the Nation, Page A19.)***

"I myself had been shot at when we had an operation in November," he said. "People are being shot. (And) all they do is talk."

He also had harsh words for Pamalakaya, which identified several logging firms in Aurora and Quezon allegedly involved in illegal logging but left untouched by the government task force.

"I hope they could help us identify their fisherfolk members in the Umiray River whose *bancas* are being used by illegal loggers to tow logs out of the forest," Defensor said.

As for Mayor Avellaneda's denial that he was not involved in illicit forest operations, Defensor was firm on the task force's finding that "he is an illegal logger."

Act immediately

Focusing on Defensor's charge that politicians were behind illegal logging in the country, Pimentel said the secretary and other environment officials should act immediately "if they have the goods on them."

"There is no need for additional talk," the opposition leader said, adding that the guilty politicians should be prosecuted immediately and put in jail.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said environment authorities should prosecute the guilty parties "to the hilt."

"Whether big-time or small-time, all of them should be prosecuted for causing so much destruction to lives and property," Drilon said in a separate phone interview.

Defensor said the DENR would not stop its campaign against illegal loggers in Quezon, Agusan del Sur and Negros Occidental with the filing of charges against three mayors, a former representative of Quezon and a barangay chair.

"Our work is not finished," he said.

But he said the DENR's "work is difficult," referring to the need to reforest eight million hectares of forest lands and protect seven million hectares more. ***With a report from Christine O. Avendaño***

Reds target big loggers but continue 'tax' take

From page A1

"If GMA (President Macapagal-Arroyo) is afraid to go after this group of commercial loggers, our Red fighters will perform the task in pursuit of our vow to serve the best interest of the people," the spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) yesterday told the INQUIRER.

Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal reiterated that the revolutionary movement was not condoning environmental destruction. But the CPP leader said: "We impose revolutionary tax because they operate within our territorial jurisdiction." He did not elaborate.

Retired Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus, the country's reforestation czar, had said the New People's Army, the armed wing of the CPP, depended on the revolutionary taxes it squeezed from both illegal and legal loggers.

Worst rights violator

Corpus, a former instructor at the Philippine Military Academy, became a top NPA commander but later left the guerrilla group.

Rosal branded the government-licensed commercial loggers that were allowed to cut trees by the thousands of hectares "as part of the present league of the worst human rights violators in the country."

He claimed that the revolutionary movement was already investigating loggers, illegal fishers, mining companies and quarry operators.

"They can expect subpoenas from the special revolutionary people's courts anytime," Rosal said, claiming that the CPP knew them all.

Destroy equipment

Rosal said all the accused would be given a chance to explain their side during trial.

"If they decide to ignore the invitation to appear before the people's court, they will be tried in absentia and subsequently the punishment will be meted out if they deserve it," he said.

He claimed that NPA units had already conducted an initial investigation of the operation of big-time loggers in their areas.

Asked what kind of punishment would be imposed by the NPA on erring commercial loggers, Rosal declined to categorically offer any answer. "I don't want to preempt the judgment of the people's court."

He said the NPA had already shown the kind of punishment it imposes on those who defile the environment.

"Most likely, all their equipment will be destroyed. We have already done that in Cagayan Valley and Mindanao areas," Rosal said.

The announcement by the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force on Friday that it had filed cases of illegal logging against a former congressman and three mayors from the provinces of Quezon, Agusan del Sur and Negros elicited not praise but flak from certain environmentalists.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal, who is pushing for a 30-year total ban on commercial logging, urged Corpus and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to go after big-time loggers.

Fr. Pete Montallana, coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples' Apostolate in the Prelature of Infanta and director of the Tribal Center for Development, also urged the government to go after the big-time buyers of illegally cut logs.

"And they are plenty in General Nakar and Real towns," Montallana said in a phone interview.

Transit point

He said the Agta natives had informed him that Sitio Makalya in Barangay Daraitan, the last village of General Nakar before the town of Tanay, Rizal, was being used as a transit point for the hauling of illegally cut logs from the Sierra Madre.

"The massive cutting of trees in the Sierra Madre still continues to this day. If the government is really serious in its fight against illegal logging, it should block that exit point and arrest the perpetrators," the priest said.

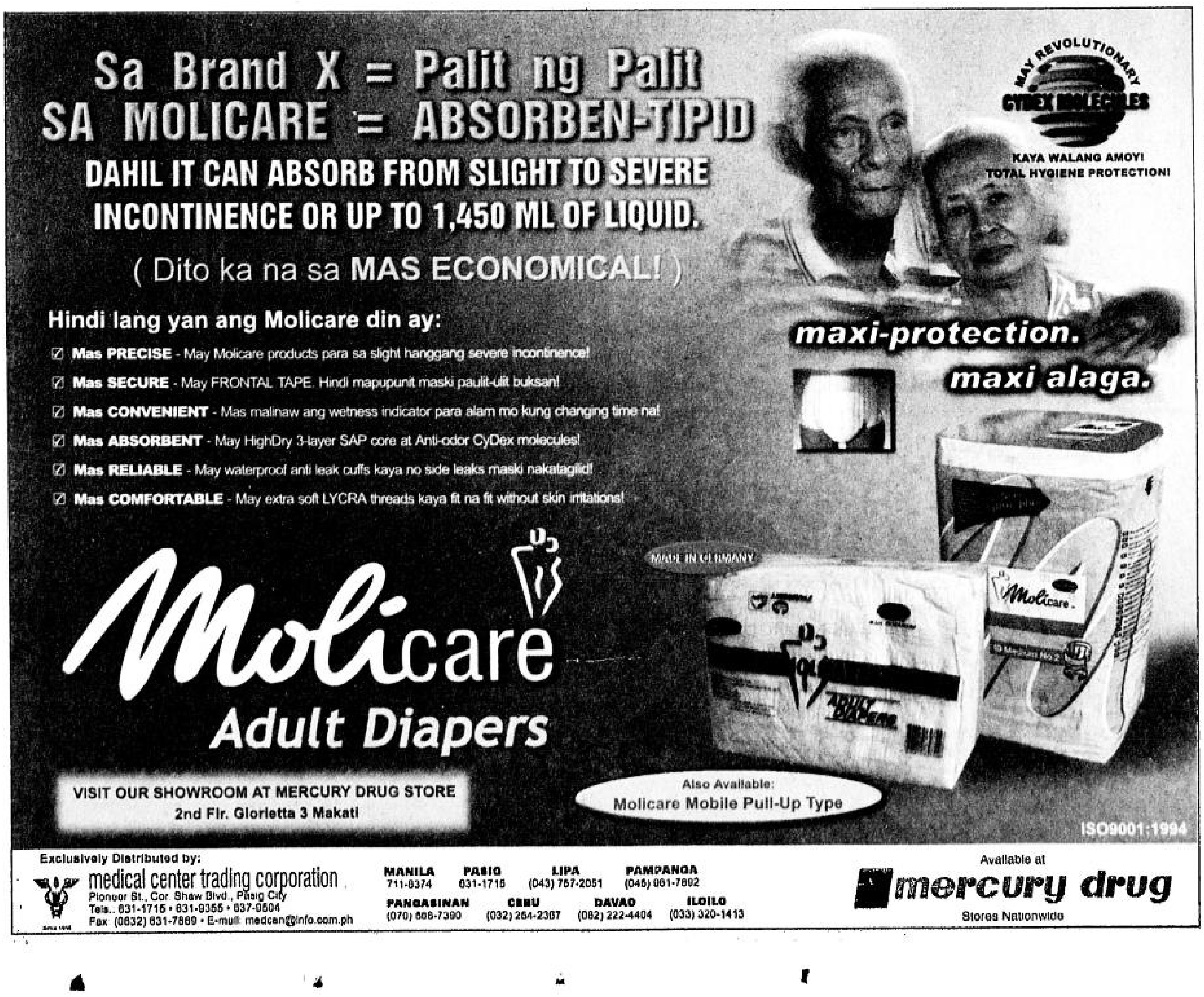
Rosal blamed government-sponsored logging for the denudation of the Sierra Madre.

He revealed that the so-called imported logs from Malaysia were actually taken from the Isabela portion of the Sierra Madre.

"Now that there are less trees to cut in their logging concessions, these big-time loggers are engaged in the buying of illegally cut logs from carabao loggers. The big-time loggers maintain several buying stations and sawmills in the slopes of the mountain," Rosal said.

Although he defended General Nakar Mayor Hernando Avellaneda from charges of illegal logging, Rosal said, "Avellaneda could not totally escape blame, being an official of the government that allows logging."

ROSAL



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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil** ■ *Assistant Editor* **Cenon B. Bibe**

Vendor shoots MMDA worker

By Irene C. Perez

THE HARD-NOSED sidewalk clearing operation of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) was met with violence Saturday night when a member of the agency was shot by an unidentified vendor of pirated video discs.

MMDA Clearing Operations Team head Robert Esquivel said Concordio Baclian, 33, was attacked along Aurora Boulevard in Cubao at about 9 p.m.

According to Esquivel, Baclian, head of the MMDA's Task Force Cubao, suffered a wound in the lower part of his right eye inflicted by a .22-cal. slug.

The victim was rushed to the East Avenue Medical Center and was transferred to the Eye Scan Diagnostic Center in Quezon City.

He was declared out of danger but he could go blind, Esquivel, quoting doctors, said.

Baclian, in a barong, was the platoon leader of the MMDA clearing team posted in the area.

Reports said a man, posing as a pedestrian, walked up to Baclian and shot him.

Esquivel said members of Baclian's team identified the suspect as a vendor they apprehended around Christmas last year.

The suspect was reportedly selling pirated music and video compact discs in a pushcart and refused to stay off the sidewalk.

When Baclian's clearing team approached him, he threatened the MMDA men that there would be trouble should they confiscate his goods.

"We should be alert," Esquivel said in Filipino.

The MMDA has 30 men guarding the area against illegal vendors. They have no police escort to back them up.

These men are posted 10 meters apart to make sure no illegal vendor could operate on the sidewalks.

Esquivel said their team was disadvantaged because the vendors knew them by face while they did not know who or how many they were up against.

He said if any of their men felt threatened or feared for their safety, they could resign.

The MMDA is coordinating with the Central Police District regarding Baclian's case.

Esquivel said they would file frustrated murder charges against the suspect once he is caught.

In 2003, sidewalk clearing casualties included MMDA employee Armando Sanchez of Tondo, who was stabbed by an incensed *balut* vendor in Makati.

Also, vendor Eladio Tuacar was shot dead by SPO2 Sabado Pujeda after the former fired his gun at MMDA personnel.

Last year, vendor Reynaldo Garcia admitted that he burned an MMDA Organized Bus Route office in Baclaran with three unidentified companions.

The MMDA's controversial campaign has been the subject of protests by urban poor groups and vendors who blame MMDA chair Bayani Fernando for taking away their livelihood.

NCRPO to boost visibility

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HOPEFULLY, you will see more policemen on the streets.

The National Capital Region Police Office is increasing the number of police checkpoints from 21 to 37 or one checkpoint for every police station in the metropolis.

Checkpoints will be manned 24 hours a day, with policemen ordered to be more alert from midnight to 6 a.m., when most crimes are perpetrated, the NCRPO said in a statement distributed to the five police districts.

Currently, it is observed that some checkpoints are set up from midnight to 6 a.m. only.

Aside from increasing the number of checkpoints, the NCRPO ordered the deployment of more police patrols.

More police patrols

The number of visibility patrols all over the metropolis shall be increased from 41 to 60, NCRPO Director Avelino Razon Jr. said.

These are aside from the 11 stationary checkpoints which have been put up in strategic areas in Metro Manila.

Razon told the heads of the five police districts in the NCR to regularly inspect the deployment of their men to make sure they are not sleeping on the job.

There have been numerous reports and complaints about policemen sleeping while on duty, especially at night.

Razon encouraged citizens to report to the NCRPO any policeman whom they would see sleeping on the job.

LLDA shakeup to make room for new chief's men

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE NEW head of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) plans to bring in new employees to the agency, which may explain the termination of the contracts of some contractual employees.

"It's normal for a (new) GM (general manager) to bring his own men," LLDA General Manger Ed Manda said on the phone.

Asked how many he was planning to bring in, Manda said "less than 15 percent" of the contractual workforce of the agency.

In an interview, former LLDA chair Casimiro Ynares III also told the INQUIRER that he too brought in some of his men when he assumed the agency's top post in February last year.

The disclosure of the current and past LLDA administrators exposed what appears to be a cycle of firing and hiring of contractuals at the agency.

Most of those affected are janitorial laborers with a pay of about P6,000.

Five years or more

But Manda assured contractual employees who have worked for five years that their contracts would be renewed.

He said, "(The contracts of) those who have been working here for five years or so would of course be renewed."

Manda explained that "these are people who are doing 'regular' jobs in the agency."

"But those who have been with us for only three to four months, we would have to let their contracts expire," he said.

Manda said by next week, he would already have renewed some of these contracts.

"We know people are anxious," he said.

On Friday, Manda said his office would have completed reviewing contracts before Jan. 31. Before this day, he would have to rehire or reject contractual workers, he said.

In a memorandum dated Jan. 19, Manda stated that "effective Jan. 31, all contractual employees, whose contracts have expired shall, in the meantime, not be required to report for work."

Jaywalkers face immediate arrest

FIRST the wet flag, then the pink prison van.

While claiming success during the first week of the implementation of the wet flag scheme, an official of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said yesterday that they would now be putting teeth on their campaign to keep pedestrians off roads.

Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said three pink prison vans would be backing up the seven wet flag trucks that are currently making the rounds of Metro Manila.

He said pedestrians who would insist on staying or walking on roads would immediately be "jailed" inside the vans and lectured on traffic rules and safety.

Vergel de Dios said the lecture could last from 20 minutes to an hour.

According to him, there would be no need for a prison truck to accompany each wet flag truck since the latter had been proven effective in keeping people on sidewalks.

Vergel de Dios said that since the project's implementation, 90 percent of the pedestrians have been kept off the roads.

The wet flag truck is a mobile unit bearing large white flags measuring seven by five feet.

MMDA men periodically pour water on the flags to drive off, and to not wet, pedestrians from the road, especially in busy thoroughfares like Edsa and Commonwealth Avenue. *Irene C. Perez*

Lapu-Lapu makes Luneta comeback

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE CEBUANO hero is rising again from the depths of controversy.

The towering statue of Lapu-Lapu, the Mactan chieftain who crushed the ambitions of Ferdinand Magellan in the 16th century, would again stand tall in his heroic form on the sprawling Rizal Park.

"The Statue of the Sentinel of Freedom," a 30-foot statue of Lapu-Lapu crafted by sculptor Juan Sajid Imao, would rise once more in the park some 500 meters behind the monument of national hero Jose Rizal.

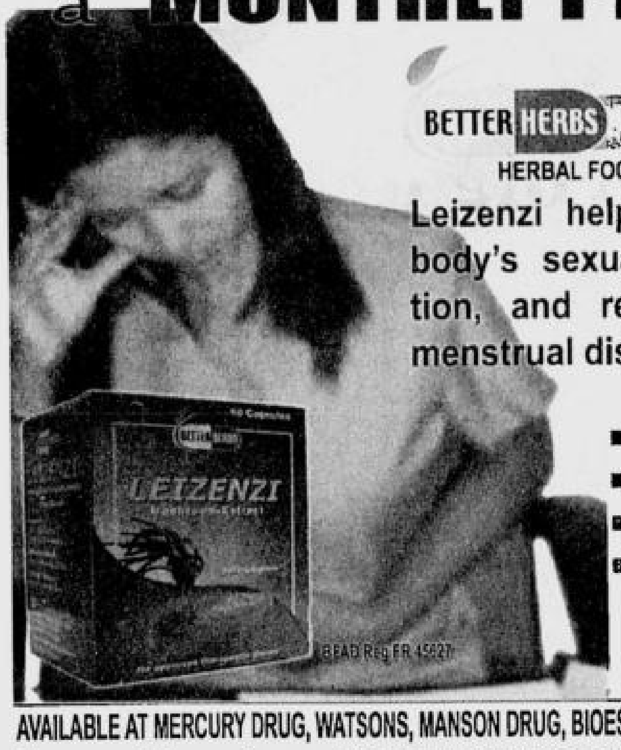
This time though, a sturdier brass version would be erected in what used to be a skating rink at the Agrifina Circle, which is also known as Valencia Circle.

A statue made of resin was put up in February 2004 but was dismantled months later when strong winds—and objections from the National Historical Institute—threatened to topple it.

"We received a letter (from the Department of Tourism) telling us to proceed with the installment of the final metal brass statue," said Cielo Imao, the sculptor's wife, who helps him manage his Marikina City workshop.

The "Notice to Proceed" was signed by Tourism Sec. Ace Durano, also a Cebuano.

Imao said they aim to complete the erection of the brass statue by the second week of February, at the latest.



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METROBRIEFS

Rizal Park cleanup

POLICE and social workers in Manila rounded up 140 men and women from the Rizal Park in a clearing operation over the weekend. The operation was part of the city's "Oplan Lingap Alaga," a social welfare program to keep vagrants, the homeless and petty criminals out of Manila's parks and streets. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Truck hits bike rider

RICO Pagalan, 23, of Parola Compound, Tondo, died at about 9 a.m. yesterday, when the bicycle he was on was hit by a 10-wheeler truck on the Del Pan Bridge in Port Area, Manila. Police said driver Lolito Nonata failed to see the victim. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Free breast screening

THE VALENCIA Cortez Foundation (VCF), with the Philippine Foundation for Breast Care and the Zonta Club of Metro Ortigas Foundation will be offering free breast diagnostic screening for women from poor families. Screening will be at the Breast Care Center at the East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City. VCF was started by the children of Prudencio Perez Cortez and Lourdes Valencia.

Plaridel clubhouse opens

SAMAHANG Plaridel, an association of journalists, will open its new clubhouse today at 6:30 p.m. with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza as guests of honor. The clubhouse, which will be open to the public, will be at the third floor of Traveler's Life Building, T.M. Kalaw Street, in front of the National Library.

R. Cuisia; 70

DR. REMBERTO Cuisia, who died Thursday at age 70, will be buried tomorrow at 2 p.m. at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Quezon City. His body lies at Funeraria Paz on Araneta Avenue in Quezon City. Surviving him are his wife, Elena, and children Reynaldo, Rolando, Renato, Erlina Cruz and Elvira Dabir. Cuisia, a neurosurgeon, also taught at the UST College of Medicine.

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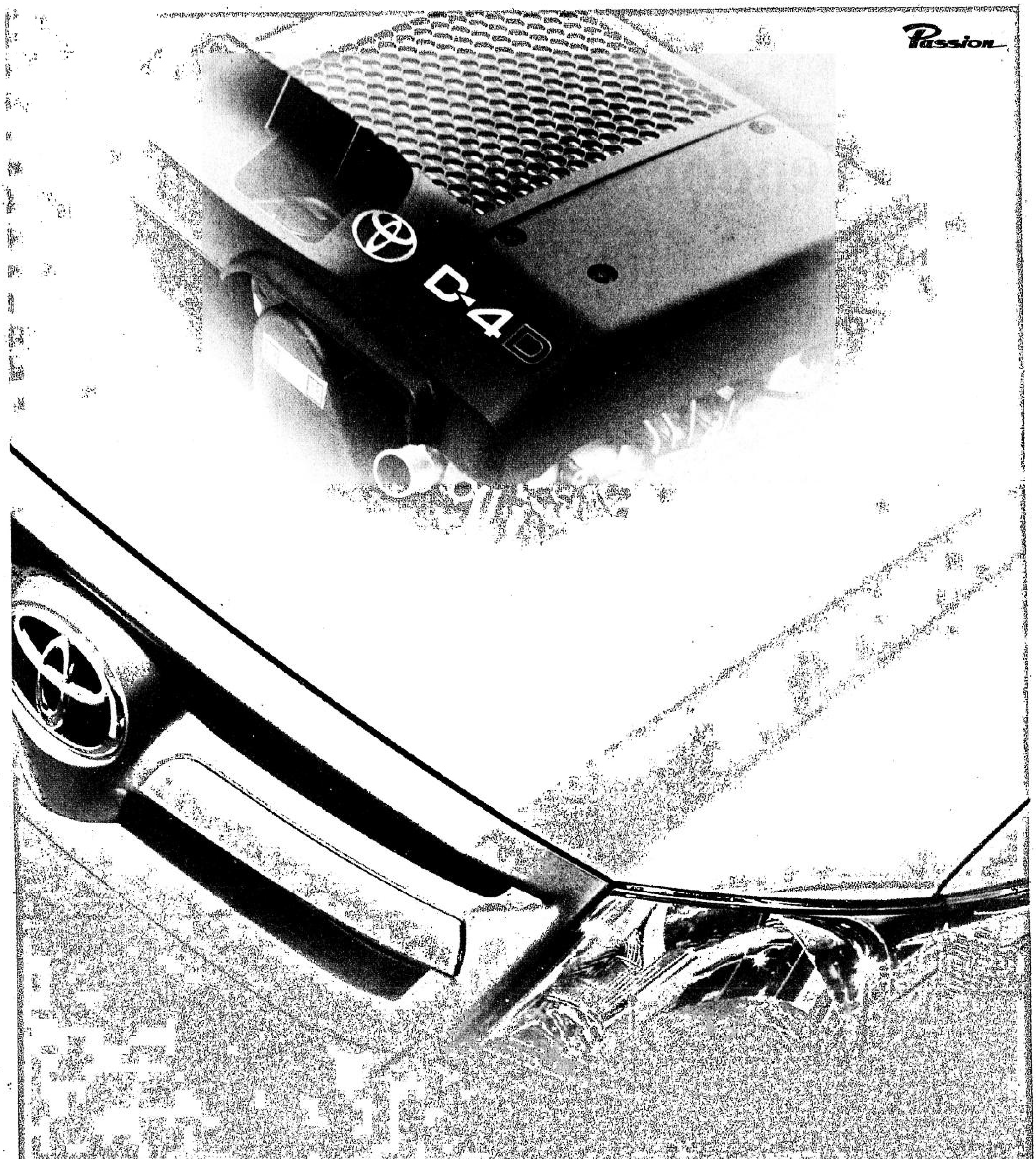

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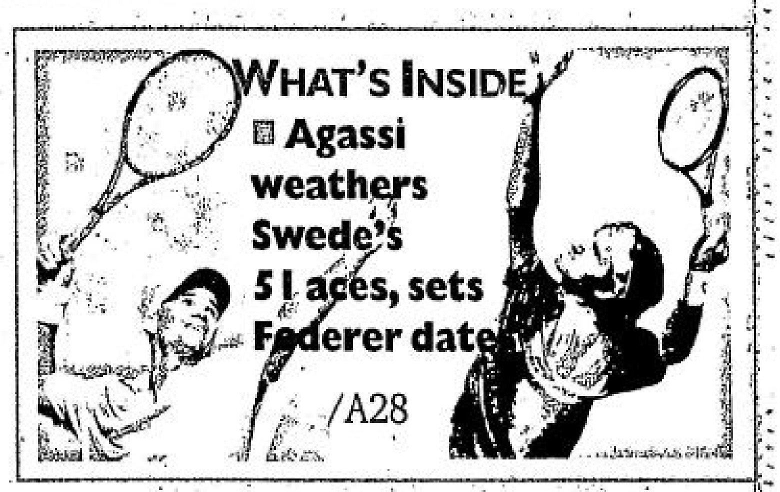
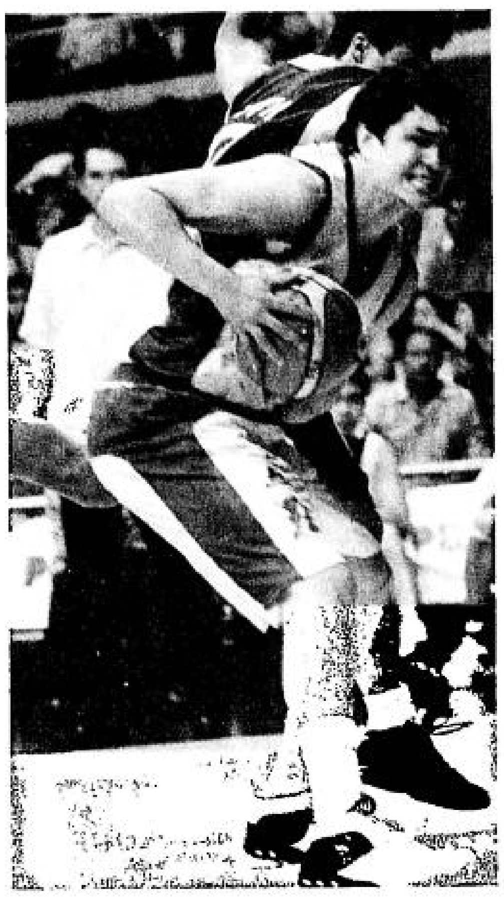
Phone Pals sweep past T'Chargers, gain finals



WHAT'S INSIDE
- Agassi weathers Swede's 51 aces, sets Federer date /A28



SHELL'S Tony dela Cruz grabs the rebound off Talk 'N Text's Victor Pablo in their semifinal tussle last night. The Phone Pals won.

By June Navarro

GAME WEDNESDAY *(Araneta Coliseum)*
7:10 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Barangay Ginebra

JIMMY Alapag and Bong Ravena drove the final nail on Shell's coffin as Talk 'N Text advanced to the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup Finals with a hard-earned 102-96 overtime win last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Alapag unloaded six points in the extension and Ravena had five to take the fight out of the Turbo Chargers and allow the Phone Pals to sweep the best-of-five semifinal series.

Although hounded by Rensy Bajar throughout, the cat-quick Alapag managed to escape with 22 points while Ravena and Felix Belano added 16 points each for the Phone Pals, who hardly missed the injured Willie Miller.

The defending champion Phone Pals reached their third Finals stint in the last six conferences, getting a chance for a back-to-back All-Filipino championship against the winner of the San Miguel Beer-Barangay Ginebra showdown.

In the second game, San Miguel took a 2-1 series lead via a 96-91 decision over Barangay Ginebra in front of the conference's biggest crowd to date.

A total of 12,905 paying fans trooped to the Big Dome, a bulk of which hoped to watch the Kings score a win over the Beermen.

But Dondon Hontiveros came up big in the third quarter to hold off a Ginebra uprising and the Beermen put together solid fourth quarter to seal the win.

San Miguel guns for a finals slot in Game 4 Wednesday.

No team in league history has won the AFC crown for two straight seasons in the last 19 years. Great Taste last pulled the trick in 1984-85.

"I'm not going to be surprised if we repeat what Great Taste did. I was on that team when it happened," said Talk 'N Text coach Joel Banal, whose Phone Pals won the 2003 AFC title, the first for the Manny V. Pangilinan-owned franchise since joining the league in 1996.

Miller, the team's top scorer, suited up for the Phone Pals but the 2002 MVP was forced to rest a sprained left ankle he suffered in Game 2.

It snapped Miller's streak of 188 games played, the second longest active run after Marlou Aquino's 212 consecutive outings.

"It doesn't matter. What's important is that we're here in the Finals," said Miller.

The Turbo Chargers simply collapsed for the second time after the Phone Pals forced the game into overtime despite falling behind by as many as four points in the final 51 seconds.

The scores:

First Game

TALK 'N TEXT 102—Alapag 22, Ravena 16, Belano 16, Telan 10, De Ocampo 9, Gelig 8, Pablo 8, Salangsang 7, Camaso 6, Fran 0.

SHELL 96—Dela Cruz 22, Alvarez 16, Tubid 13, Ferreria 12, Bajar 12, Mamaril 11, Cruz 3, Calaguio 3, Sotto 2, Sta. Maria 1, Yap 1, Jackson 0.

Quarters: 12-14, 43-33, 72-57, 86-86, 102-96

Second Game

SAN MIGUEL 96—Racela 23, Hontiveros 17, Ildefonso 15, Seigle 14, Villoria 8, Belasco 7, Pena 7, Singson 5, Canlas 0.

GINEBRA 91—Caguioa 25, Helterbrand 16, Menk 13, Santos 13, Adducul 8, Seigle 7, Dimaunahan 6, Salvacion 3, Noble 0.

Quarters: 29-24, 51-43, 73-72, 96-91.

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

TENNIS: 2005 Australian Open Fourth Round; 8 a.m. and 4::30 p.m. (r - 10 p.m.); Day 8 Highlights; 8 p.m.: STAR Sports - Grand Slam tennis action continues in the fourth round.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: NFL - AFC Championship; 7:30 a.m. (r-8:30 p.m.); ESPN - Find out who makes it to the Super Bowl in the AFC Championship Game.

BASKETBALL: NBA - Nets vs Suns; 9 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports - New Jersey takes on Phoenix.

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Draw Date : Dec. 18, 2004
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Mr. Edwin Suplala, Bataan — Samsung V50 Digital Camera
Mr Gerardo Morales, Cavite — Samsung HD938 DVD Player
Mr Owen San Juaquin, Naga City — Magic Sing
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Tribu Sugbu thwarts Spring Oil for title

CEBU CITY—The Skygo/Sirlitz-backed Tribu Sugbu dropped a 24-11 bomb in the third quarter and then held off Spring Cooking Oil-supported Laguna Spring, 85-79, to win the NBC Panasonic pre-season basketball crown Saturday at the Cebu Coliseum here.

With the partisan crowd cheering them on, Lito Gillamac's Tribes wiped out a 46-38 Spring lead and surged ahead, 62-59, going into the fourth quarter.

In the opener, Mayor Freddie Tinga's Forward Taguig repeated over the General Feeds Masters, 78-76, to finish third in the short series sponsored by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Molten, Nature's Spring and Cebu's JY Square Discovery Mall.

Marvin Mercado, Russ Neil Paglinawan and Morrie Akad delivered the goods when the Tribes needed them most to spark the come-from-behind victory over the Cooking Oil Masters of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro.

Spring was in command early and even took a 13-point lead, 41-28, in the second stanza. But Mercado, the only remaining member of the Tribu Sugbu team that won last year's NBC inaugural crown, ignited that fiery third quarter run with a soaring dunk over Chris Corbin.

Mercado, who averaged 13 points per game, was named the tourney's most valuable player.

The Scores:

First Game

TAGUIG 78—De Castro 12, Villar, Cruz 9, Zablan 9, Gonzales 9, Nuqui 7, J. Reyes 5, Alberto 5, Marucot 4, Robillos 3, Constantino 2, De Guia 2, Gandarosa 0, Adon 0, Magsambol 0

GEN. FEEDS 76—Saladaga 18, Bucao 12, Caingiet 12, Elim 10, Sevilla 7, Abalon 6, U. Reyes 4, Rodriguez 4, Mepana 3, Magsumbol 0, Balgue 0, Clar 0, Celiz 0

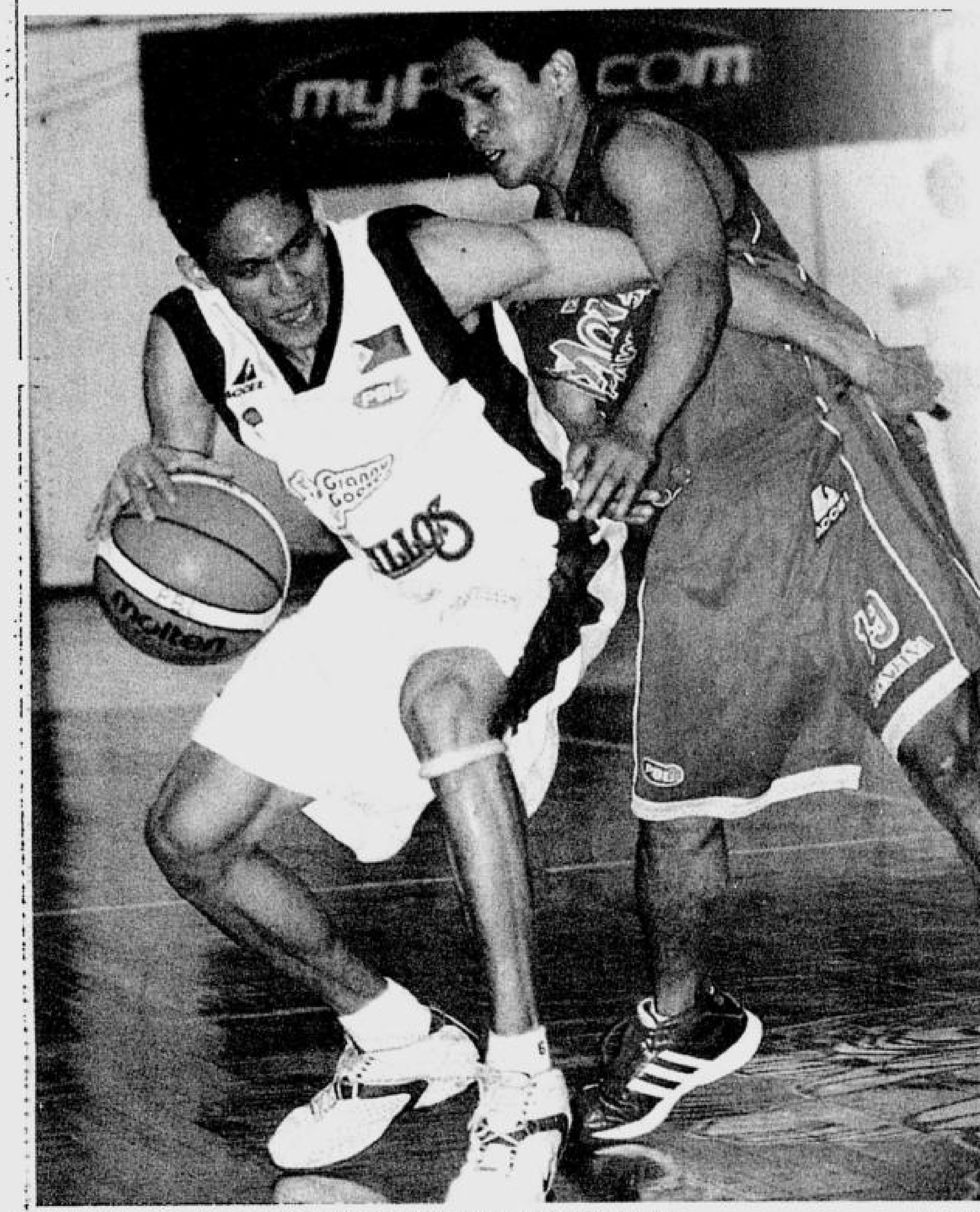
Quarters: 19-24, 37-47, 58-62, 78-76

Second Game

TRIBU 85—Paglinawan 18, Mercado 12, Akad 12, Calolo 2, Briones 8, Guerrero 7, Cabanes 6, Sampilo 4, Berame 2, Tuadles 2, Abelong 0, Esperat 0, Arda 0

LAGUNA 79—Corbin 13, Manuel 12, Caceres 11, M. Reyes 11, Vivero 8, Kalaw 8, Proceso 6, Alminario 6, Tolentino 4, Alejar 2, Garcia 0, Dalino 0, Santos 0, Lingal 0

Quarters: 17-24, 38-46, 62-59, 87-79.



DENNIS Concha of Granny Goose tries to get past Al Vergara of Montaña. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Misolas wields magic as FEU's Wizards sizzle

GAMES TUESDAY (*Makati Coliseum*)
2 p.m.—Magnolia-FEU vs Welcoat
4p.m.—Montaña vs Granny Goose

By Jasmine W. Payo

FORWARD Jason Misolas knows his role with the Magnolia-FEU Wizards. With a crowded frontcourt lineup, the former pro player had to settle with numbers that belie his capabilities.

Although Misolas has been getting ample playing minutes in the PBL Open Championship, reigning Most Valuable Player Arwind Santos is apparently his team's offensive focal point.

But Misolas finally held his own in the Wizards' 61-54 victory over Welcoat Paints last Saturday that gave Magnolia-FEU the lead in its own best-of-three semifinal series. The win also extended the Wizards' amazing run to 10 games.

Welcoat had threatened to snap the streak as last year's losing finalists staged a superb comeback in the second half.

The Wizards blew a 30-18 halftime advantage but Misolas picked up the slack as he scored eight of his team's next 12 points that swung the momentum back to the defending champions.

The Paintmasters, however, proved relentless in the final four minutes as they moved up within 49-51. A Misolas jumper followed by Cesar Catli's triple gave the Wizards' the lead for good, 54-51.

Misolas finished with a team-high 16 points, a big jump from his scoring average of 5.7 points this conference. He also grabbed six rebounds and a steal.

It was indeed the perfect time for Misolas to be on target since the Paintmasters succeeded in taking the Wizards' lead scorers—Santos and Catli—out of the offensive equation.

Catli scored only nine points and Santos made seven.

"Jason will always be there for the team," said coach Koy Banal after Misolas was cited as the PBL Player of the Week. "He won't force his shot if he doesn't feel it. He will only do things you want him to do like playing defense, getting rebounds and issuing assists."

"He's a winner," added Banal. "He's the only Magnolia player who has back-to-back championship experience that's why I asked him to share that experience with his teammates."

And Banal is hoping his experience would again come handy when the Wizards shoot for a semifinal sweep of Welcoat on Tuesday.

Benilde booters clinch 1st round NCAA sr crown

ST. BENILDE goalie John Vapor's quick reflexes brought down defending champion San Beda College in an exciting close to the first round of the NCAA Season 80 football senior division.

With the match going into penalty shoot-out, Vapor caught San Beda's Jeremiah Jiao's shot as CSB claimed the first round pennant and opened up the chance for a two-round sweep of the tournament.

Records return to scratch when tournament action moves up to the next level at the Philippine Navy Football Field 1 at the Global City in Taguig today.

College of St. Benilde juniors will attempt for a repeat of last year's double-round domination when it faces San Beda College again at 9 a.m. The Greenhills XI beat the boys from Mendiola last Saturday, 2-0, for a perfect win record in six matches in the first round and a major double victory for the tournament's host school.

On the other hand, the senior CSB XI begins its quest for the outright championship against Mapua Institute of Technology at 11 p.m. The Cardinals hope to avenge their 1-4 loss in the first round.

Darkhorse Philippine Christian University meets late qualifier Colegio de San Juan de Letran at 1 p.m. in the other juniors match, while the senior Bedans collide with Jose Rizal University at 3 p.m. to complete the day's activities.

Letran and Mapua won last Saturday against University of Perpetual Help and JRU, respectively, to end up tied at fourth place among the juniors with 2-3 records. But the Knights won in the penalty shoot-out, 4-2, at the end of the 10-minute extension of their drawn Jan. 10 match to advance to the semifinals.

NCRAA CAGING

Patriots, Generals stay ahead

GAMES TODAY (*Pasay Sports Complex*)
9 a.m.—RTU vs La Salle-Dasmariñas
10:30 a.m.—EAC vs PUP

THE LA SALLE-DASMARIÑAS Patriots kept up with the Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals yesterday in the 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament at the Pasay Sports Complex.

Roger Nacpil and Francis Junatas emerged as the Patriots' most dynamic pair in the last quarter as they banged in the big baskets, which carried La Salle-Dasma to an 87-84 beating of Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

They stayed in front with the Generals, who streaked to their second straight triumph at the expense of the Arellano University Flaming Arrows, 72-68.

La Salle-Dasma and EAC share 4-1 win-loss records after the Patriots fell, 73-87, to the Colegio de San Lorenzo Griffins earlier.

Nacpil delivered 21 points and combined with Junatas for 12 points in the last 10 minutes.

Their baskets found their mark after the Maroons fought back and tied the count at 66.

Nino Songco and Bong Melocoton continued to do great damage against the opposition with their outside shots as they carried the Generals out of a 47-47 tie in the third.

Songco hit 19 points while Melocoton banged in 18, including three crucial treys in the second half.

Melocoton and Songco's triples in the closing minutes of the third period enabled the Generals to move ahead, 54-49.

The Maroons, who had Eljun Lapera back in action after winning another collegiate crown two weeks ago, got 19 points from their ace shooter.

The scores:

First Game

EAC 72—Songco 19, Melocoton 18, Buenafe 10, Pasaol 10, Du 9, Quiambao 3, Valderama 2, Musni 1.

ARELLANO 68—Martinez 14, D. Martinez 14, Ciriacruz 12, Boliver 11, Carino 9, Daroya 4, Magcawas 2, Estilo 2, Tumulak 0.

Halftime: 33-29.

Second Game

LA SALLE-DASMARIÑAS 87—Nacpil 21, Macalma 16, Hasanon 14, Pelayo 8, Lasin 6, Salado 5, Patambang 5, Hasanon 3, Canlas 3, Moncayo 2, Bagulo 2.

PUP 84—Lapera 19, Nunez 15, De la Cruz 11, Saquilio 10, Infante 8, Cruz 4, Tenorio 4, Legaspi 4, Garcia 2, Sta. Rita 0.

Mayweather stops Bruseles in round 8

MIAMI—Floyd Mayweather Jr. took a step toward a title in a third weight class Saturday by stopping Henry Bruseles with 55 seconds left in the eighth round.

Mayweather, former WBC super featherweight and lightweight champion was never in trouble as his quick combinations frustrated Bruseles in the scheduled 12-round bout at AmericanAirlines Arena.

While Mayweather set the tone in the fight with his speed, he used an impressive power-punching display in the eighth to send Bruseles to the canvas with a left-right combination to the head.

The Puerto Rican Bruseles (21-3-1, 13 KOs) got to his feet but Mayweather (33-0, 22 KOs) was ready with a left to the body, which set up an additional series of unanswered shots to the head. Bruseles again fell to the canvas but again beat the 10-count. *AP*

Bautista-Callejo snares classified doubles title

TERTON Craft's Eric Bautista and Bethel's Richard Callejo turned out to be the best pair as they bucked the odds and won twice over the tandem of Shaine Galang (Khalky) and Warren Perolino (FDC) to capture the championship of the classified doubles event of the first leg of the Metro Manila Darts Circuit 2005 (MMDC) Saturday night at the Daungan Restaurant, Mother Ignacia St., Quezon City.

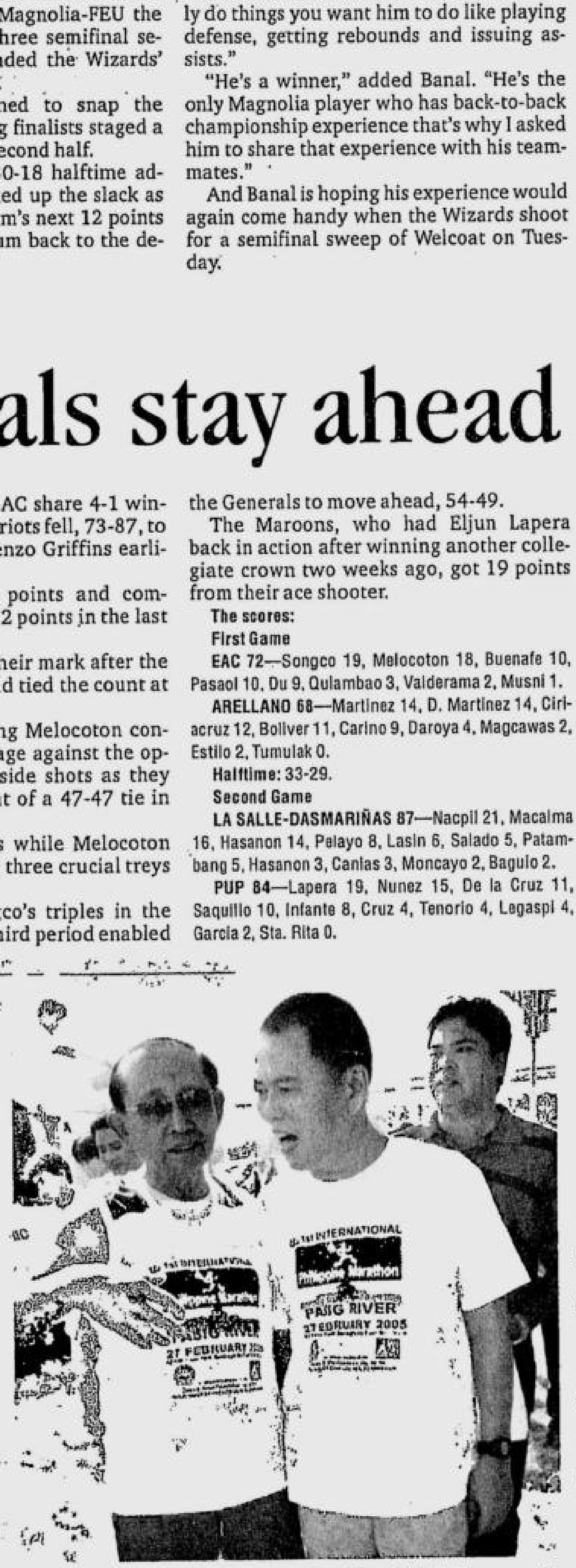
Coming from the loser's bracket, Bautista and Callejo turned back Aldo Anover and Arlan Santos in the semis to arrange a finals duel with Galang and Perolino, who defeated the pair of Mon Sabalboro and Bochok Grota.

Galang and Perolino had two chances to dispose of the eventual titlists but just couldn't hit the mark as their game soured up.

En route to the semis of the tournament that attracted 51 pairs, Galang and Perolino defeated the tandem of Rene Quitua and Bobby Concepcion.

The Open Singles event, wherein darters can gain ranking and rating points, was played yesterday at the same venue.

The twin events kicking off the 2005 season of the Darts Council of the Philippines, were supported by Terton Craft, Dartware and Daungan Restaurant. In all, there will be 12 legs to be played in different venues all over Metro Manila to determine the country's best darters available for international competitions.



MARATHON FOR PASIG: Former President Fidel V. Ramos with running priest Robert Reyes and GAB Commissioner Eric Buhain (back) during the launching of the Philippine Marathon for Pasig River held at the Fort in Makati. ERIK ARAZAS

SUPERAL: Boys grade school pacesetter. JESS YUSON

RP jungolfers departing for Asian pre-qualifying

THE PHILIPPINES will be eyeing one of two slots to be disputed in the Junior World Team championship Asian Pre-qualifying stage starting tomorrow at the Orna Resort Golf & Country Club in Malacca, Malaysia.

Jungolf standouts Matthew Manotoc, Gino Bunyi, IG Gutierrez and Chris Junro Mamaril left yesterday to compete in the multi-nation competition that will pit them against the best of Asia.

Gerry Handog is head of the delegation while Balty Baltazar and Tommy Manotoc, father of Matthew, are also with the team as officials.

The team is competing under the aegis of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines as part of its program to provide continuous exposure to the country's top talents.

MANOTOC as a jungolf star

The Filipinos will try to secure an all-expenses paid stint to the tournament proper slated in Japan.

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Ateneans control 3 divisions of golfest

TAGAYTAY—Ateneo took control of college play and boys elementary while the Greenhills and Zobel branches of La Salle were in a tight duel for the boys high school plum at the start Saturday of the 4th Samsung Interscholastics golf championships at the Tagaytay Highlands Golf and Country Club here.

Kevin Lachica scored 30 Stableford points, Coloy Kintanar had 27 and Vendric Tan 24 for a day's total of 81 that pushed the Ateneo I team up by nine over La Salle. Ateneo 2 was in third at 59.

The Loyola-based golfers, getting 23 each from Claudine Chan and Riva Galvez-Tan, was also up by six over Miriam, 46-40, in the combined college-high school division and pulled away by a hefty margin in boys elementary.

Marcel Puyat delivered the goods for the Ateneo grade schoolers, coming up with a 27. Moshe Baldo backed him up with 24 and Bino dela Paz added 23 for a 74 total, 29 ahead of LSGH. Elizabeth Seton, the surprise winner in the third edition at Valley last November, was 9 points adrift at 65.

LSGH, however, banked on Miko Yee (32) and Marco Olives (28) to post 76 for a one-shot edge over LS-Zobel which was led by Justine Tambunting with 30.

Poveda Learning Center's Paulina Sotto and Andie Unson scored 23 and 19, respectively, to lead St. Paul-Pasig's Beverly Mendoza and Mara Monsalve by seven in girls grade school.

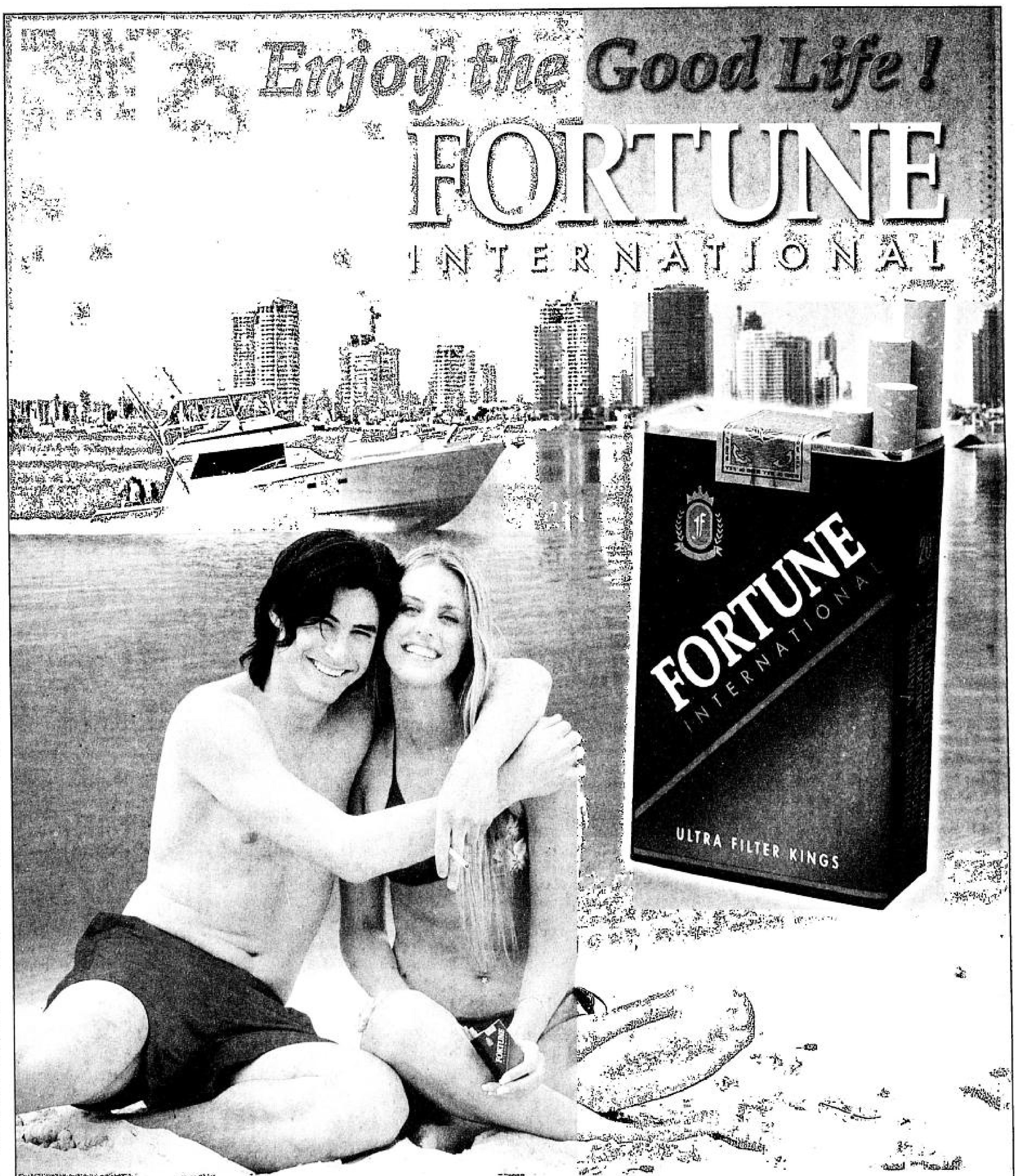
The tourney shifts to the adjacent Tagaytay Midlands course for the last two rounds Sunday and Monday.

Yee led all scorers in a record field of 151 entries from 33 schools in Metro Manila and nearby cities with his 32 points, leading Tambunting by two in the individual race.

Aaron Dimabuyu of Global City Innovative College scored 31 to inch ahead of Lachica in boys college by a mere point in boys college individual while Crystal Superal of Las Piñas High (27), Cyna Rodriguez of Miriam (25) and Debbie de Villa of GCF International (24) took the top three positions in high school-college. Wolen Superal of Golden Acres paced Puyat by two in boys grade school and Mendoza (24) led Sotto (23) in girls elementary.

In the special division, Remo Fueg of European International School was leading in the special division with his 36, good for a two-point lead over reigning Junior World champ JR Gonzales.

The tournament is being supported by Tokyo Tokyo Great Japanese, ABC Beverage, KZG by Custom Clubmakers, Rudy Project, Coppertone Sports, Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines, Rogin E and radio stations Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.98, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite and Killer Bee.



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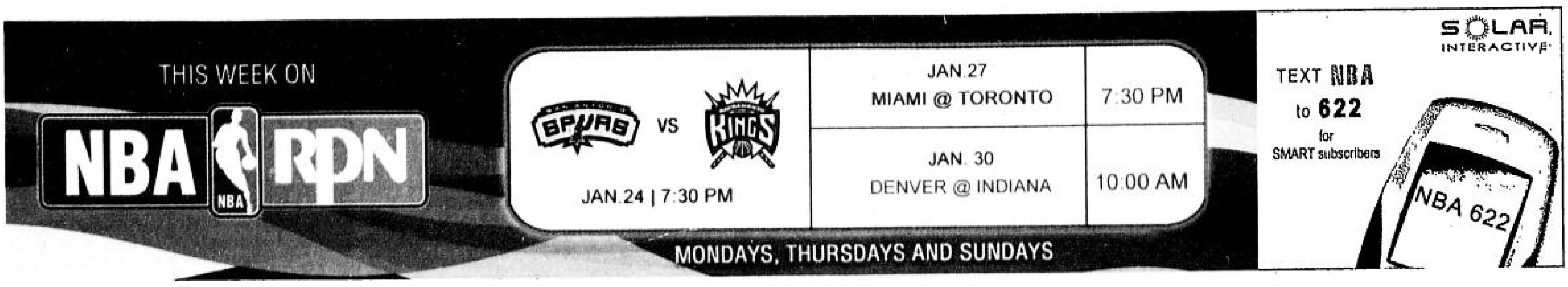
THIS WEEK ON
NBA RPN
SPURS VS KINGS
JAN.24 | 7:30 PM
JAN.27 MIAMI @ TORONTO 7:30 PM
JAN. 30 DENVER @ INDIANA 10:00 AM
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Tiger burns bright amid fog, darkness

SAN DIEGO—From dawn to dusk, Tiger Woods managed to play just six holes Saturday in the fog-delayed Buick Invitational. That was enough to change his fortunes.

He waited 2 1/2 hours to play one hole in the morning, a two-putt birdie from the fringe to complete a second-round 63 and get within three shots of the lead. Then he waited six hours to start the third round, birdied his first two holes and caught Tom Lehman when the Ryder Cup captain faltered.

When darkness finally halted play at Torrey Pines, only one thing was certain.

"It's been a long day," Woods said. "And we've got another long one tomorrow."

And there's still a long way to go.

Woods turned a bogey into an unlikely birdie by holing a bunker shot on the par-3 11th. Lehman struggled from the onset, missing a 6-foot (1.8-meter) birdie on the first hole, then having to make a pair of 8-footers (2.4-meter putts) on the next two holes, one of them for par, the other for bogey.

Woods found the 14th fairway with his tee shot, and decided to finish the hole after the horn sounded to stop play.

"One less hole to worry about," he said.

Lehman never teed off and will return there Sunday morning—assuming everyone can see.

Peter Lonard, who completed his 65 early Saturday to join Woods at 12 under through 36 holes, decided to play the 14th and made a mess of it, taking double to slip back to 11 under, along with Luke Donald.

CUTTING a dramatic silhouette against the fading sky is Tiger Woods, who finds himself on top after a fog-struck round. REUTERS

Ernie Els was 2 under through five holes and begging rules officials to halt play, saying he couldn't see. He was at 10 under, along with Kevin Sutherland and Dudley Hart.

And don't forget about Vijay Singh.

Quietly marching along in the group behind Woods—the leaders teed off on the back nine for television—the 41-year-old Fijian birdied three of his last four holes and was at 8 under.

The third round is expected to resume at 7:30 a.m.

"I can't wait to grab some dinner and repeat the process tomorrow," Woods said.

PGA tournament director Mark Russell held out hope that the Buick Invitational could avoid its first Monday finish, although everything has to fall together perfectly. No more than a one-hour delay Sunday can be tolerated. And players will not take a break after they finish the third round, heading straight to the next tee.

The leaders began the third round on No. 10. They will start the final round on No. 1.

It was chaotic, but by now, everyone is used to the soupy fog off the Pacific.

Nearly 60 players arrived Saturday morning to finish the second round. Some were on the practice range hitting soft lob wedges to about 70 yards, unable to see where the ball was landing.

After a 2 1/2-hour delay, the second round resumed.

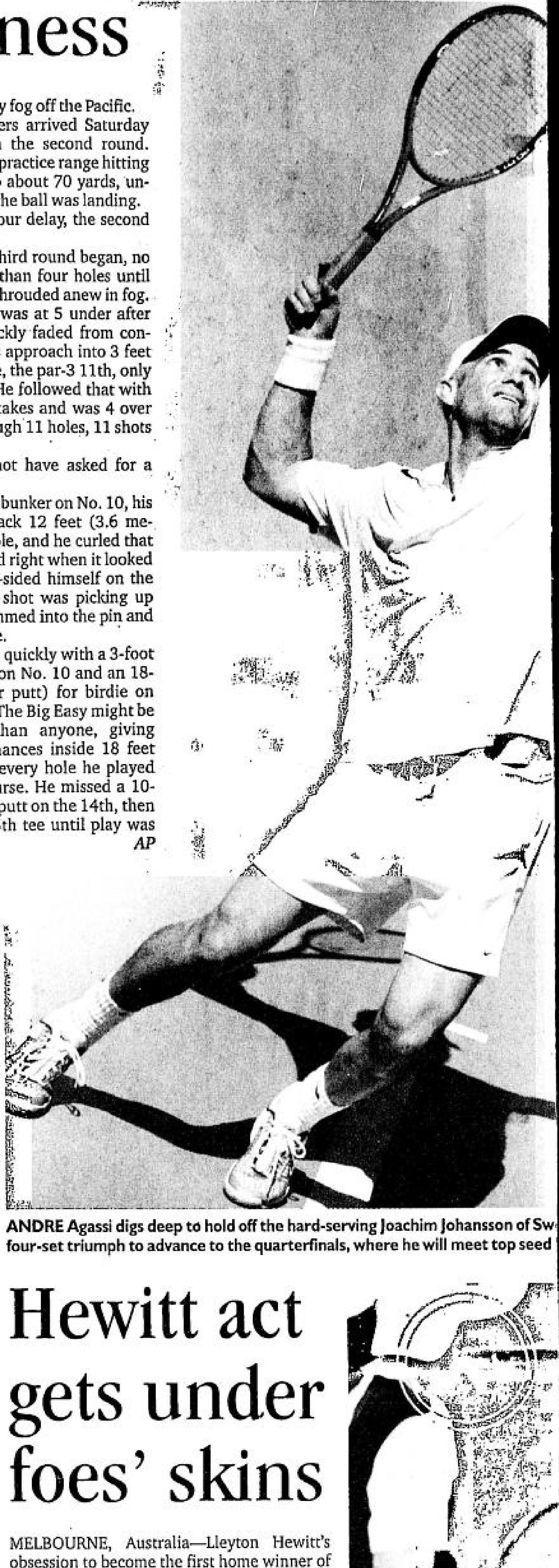
And when the third round began, no one played more than four holes until Torrey Pines was shrouded anew in fog.

Phil Mickelson was at 5 under after 36 holes, but quickly faded from contention. He hit his approach into 3 feet on his second hole, the par-3 11th, only to miss the putt. He followed that with several other mistakes and was 4 over on his round through 11 holes, 11 shots out of the lead.

Woods could not have asked for a better start.

From a fairway bunker on No. 10, his approach spun back 12 feet (3.6 meters) above the hole, and he curled that in for a birdie. And right when it looked like he had short-sided himself on the 11th, his bunker shot was picking up speed when it rammed into the pin and dropped for birdie.

Els also started quickly with a 3-foot (1-meter) birdie on No. 10 and an 18-footer (5.4-meter putt) for birdie on the second hole. The Big Easy might be playing better than anyone, giving himself birdie chances inside 18 feet (5.4 meters) on every hole he played on the South course. He missed a 10-footer (3-meter) putt on the 14th, then waited on the 15th tee until play was suspended. *AP*



ANDRE Agassi digs deep to hold off the hard-serving Joachim Johansson of Sw
four-set triumph to advance to the quarterfinals, where he will meet top seed

Bulls clobber defending champions

NEW YORK—Kirk Hinrich scored 24 points and added nine assists as the Chicago Bulls continued their improved play with a 100-89 win over the Detroit Pistons in Auburn Hills on Saturday.

The Bulls had not won at the Palace of Auburn Hills in three years until this season, but Chicago has beaten the defending NBA champions twice in less than a month on the Pistons home court.

Eddy Curry added 15 points for the Bulls before fouling out, as Chicago moved to the .500 mark (19-19) for the first time this season. Antonio Davis added 14 points and eight rebounds for the Bulls.

Chicago started the season 0-9, but have now won 17 of their last 23 games and nine of the past 10 to move into contention for an Eastern Conference playoff spot.

The Pistons (23-17) continued their inconsistent play, dropping their third straight game despite a 32-point performance from Richard Hamilton.

Detroit led, 47-44, at the half, but the Bulls looked stronger after the break and took control of the game late in the fourth quarter.

Rasheed Wallace added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Pistons, while Ben Wallace hauled in 13 rebounds.

In other games, LeBron James had his second triple-double in three games as the Cleveland Cavaliers stopped the Golden State Warriors, 105-87, in Oakland.

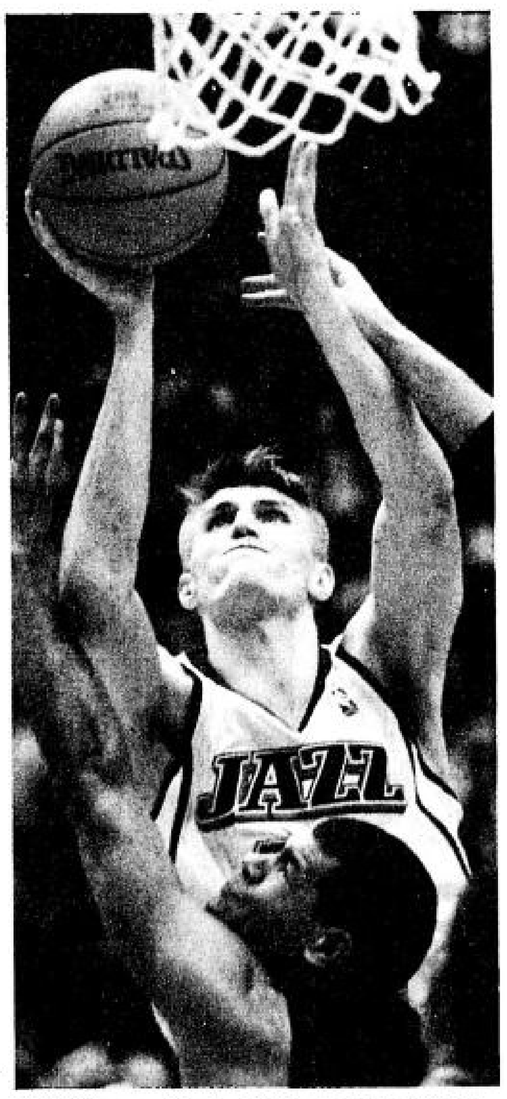
James had 28 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists just three nights after becoming the youngest player in NBA history to record a triple-double.

Eric Snow added 16 points and 12 assists for Cleveland.

James Richardson scored 22 points for the Warriors, losers of 11 of their last 12.

In Atlanta, Antoine Walker scored 29 points against his former team as the Hawks overcame a 17-point deficit to defeat the Boston Celtics, 100-96.

Al Harrington hit six freethrows in the final two minutes to seal the win for the Hawks and had 21 points. Rookie Josh Childress added a career-high 19 points for Atlanta.



UTAH forward Andre Kirilenko, who missed 26 games because of a knee injury, makes his return against Memphis. His comeback hardly mattered as the Grizzlies routed the Jazz. AP

Rookie Tony Allen had a career-high 20 points for the Celtics, who have lost nine straight games on the road.

Boston scored the first 14 points of the second half to take a 64-47 lead, but they blew that in the fourth quarter.

In Orlando, Hedo Turkoglu had 22 points to lead six Orlando players in double figures as the Magic beat the Philadelphia 76ers, 115-111.

Dwight Howard added 21 points and nine rebounds for the Magic, while Pat Garrity added 18 points.

Allen Iverson led the 76ers with 38 points and 10 assists, but had nine turnovers. Samuel Dalembert had 24 points and 16 rebounds for the Sixers.

In New Orleans, Dan Dickau hit a three-pointer with two seconds remaining to lead the Hornets to an 88-85 win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Dickau had 27 points and eight rebounds to lead New Orleans, while Lee Nailon added 22 points.

Elton Brand had 28 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Clippers.

In Indianapolis, Antawn Jamison hit the winning basket at the buzzer, leading the Washington Wizards past the Indiana Pacers, 95-93.

Jamison had 19 points and 13 rebounds for the Wizards, while Gilbert Arenas scored a team-high 33 points for the winners.

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 38 points.

In Salt Lake City, Pau Gasol scored 23 points as the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Utah Jazz, 110-94.

Shane Battier added 16 points for the Grizzlies, while Brian Cardinal scored 14 as the Grizzlies snapped a five-game losing streak in Utah.

Mehmet Okur scored 22 points to lead Utah.

In Portland, Kevin Garnett had 14 points and 16 rebounds as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Tail Blazers, 92-83.

Wally Szczerbiak added 18 points for the Timberwolves, who handed the Blazers their sixth straight loss.

Damon Stoudemire led Portland with 23 points. *Reuters*

South African swimmers enjoy record pool day

BERLIN—Ryk Neethling of South Africa broke the world record in the 100-meter medley by clocking 52.11 seconds at a short course swimming World Cup meet Saturday.

The record was only four days old—another South African, Roland Schoeman, had swum 52.51 at a short course meet in Stockholm, Sweden.

Schoeman, who failed to make the medley final, equaled another world record Saturday when he clocked 46.25 seconds in the 100-meter freestyle, tying the mark set by Ian Crocker of the United States on March 27, 2004.

EGA
ETHLING
OM

SOUTH African Ryk Neethling sets a new 100-m individual medley record. AFP

Schoeman had already claimed the previous best performance of the season with 46.45 in Stockholm.

He won the 4x100 freestyle gold medal with South Africa at last year's Athens Olympics.

In the afternoon session, Schoeman captured his second race of the day in the 50-meter butterfly, winning in 22.92.

Neethling fought hard with Thomas Rupprath of Germany, who led at the 50-meter mark. The South African recovered during the breaststroke leg to shatter the record. Rupprath finished second in 52.99.

In another close race, Therese Alshammar of Sweden edged Alison Sheppard of Britain in the women's 50-meter freestyle, clocking 24.03, a World Cup record that had been held by Sheppard since last year's competition in Berlin (24.06).

In the men's 200-meter breaststroke, world record holder Ed Moses of the United States, who won the race in Durban and Stockholm, led until the 150-meter mark but was beaten at the finish by Jim Piper of Australia. Piper touched in 2:04.03.

Moses also lost the 50 breaststroke, finishing behind Oleg Lisogor of Ukraine, the world record holder, who clocked 26.57. *AP*

NY mentor calls it quits

NEW YORK—Lenny Wilkens announced his resignation as head coach of the slumping New York Knicks on Saturday, likely ending his Hall of Fame career in the NBA.

The 67-year-old Wilkens took over as Knicks head coach last season, guiding them to a 23-19 record and leading them to the playoffs for the first time since 2001, where they were swept by New Jersey.

New York has lost nine of its past 10 games, including a frustrating 92-91 loss to the Houston Rockets on Friday. The Knicks are 17-22 and are third in the weak Atlantic Division.

Wilkens met with Knicks president Isiah Thomas following the loss to confirm his departure.

"This has been the most difficult time for me, especially the last few weeks," Wilkens said in a statement.

"After speaking at great length with my family and Isiah, I decided doing this was really in my best interest."

Former Knicks player herb Williams was named as head coach at a Saturday afternoon press conference. *Reuters*

Hewitt act gets under foes' skins

MELBOURNE, Australia—Lleyton Hewitt's obsession to become the first home winner of the Australian Open for almost three decades is upsetting his rivals.

Hewitt's manic "c'mon" battle cries after tense point victories has reached such a crescendo during early matches at the grand slam tournament that he is riling normally unflappable foes.

Even his early-career mentor Pat Rafter has pleaded with him to tone it down.

The year's first grand slam tournament reached flashpoint during Hewitt's third-round encounter with Juan Ignacio Chela here Saturday when the Argentinian spat toward him during a changeover in the fourth set.

Hewitt went on to win, 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, and book a round of 16 duel with exciting Spanish teenager Rafael Nadal on Monday, but the headlines Sunday centered on the "Spit Fury."

Front-page photos depicted the incident with Hewitt looking aghast.

The former world No. 1 said after the match that Chela had apologized to him after the game and that the matter was finished.

"He spat in my direction," Hewitt said. "He apologized at the net after the match, and I accepted his apology.

"I don't think it's the right thing, no. But it's unfortunate because we're having a good dogfight match out there. We're both competitive blokes out there. We were going for it.

"It's sad that something like that happens. But at the end of the day he apologized to me at the net when we shook hands. I said, 'Just forget about it, mate.'"

But Chela, who was Sunday fined $2,000 by tournament officials for "unsportsmanlike conduct," told reporters that he had been irked by Hewitt's on-court histrionics.

"There was one mistake I made and Lleyton made his sign and I was a bit upset about that because the match was very tense," he said.

Chela denied he had spat at Hewitt during the changeover.

"I was spitting but not in Lleyton's direction," he said through an interpreter.

An apparently irked Chela also drove a serve at Hewitt at one point during the match.

Rafter senses that Hewitt may be undermining his chances by expending too much emotional energy on court.

Even Harvard-educated American James Blake, renowned as one of the most personable members of the men's tour, was provoked into mocking Hewitt's signature hand signal and battle cry during last Thursday's second round. *AFP*

JUAN Ignacio Chela (left) app
he walks past Lleyton Hewitt
in their match.

Sharapo

MELBOURNE, Australia—W
don champion Maria Sharapo
made to sweat by an oppon
most twice her age before s
her place in the Australian
quarterfinals Sunday.

The 17-year-old Russian
was given the run around by
via Farina Elia, 32, before fin
serting herself to come from be
a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 victory.

"I was just letting her play h
and worrying about what she
ing," Sharapova said afterwar
played a solid, solid game.
great winners out of the cour
sometimes were unexpectec

"But I hung in there and I
really fought well. This was
portant. It was a good job of
back into the match."

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ina, 6-4, 6-2.

Although the rallies were
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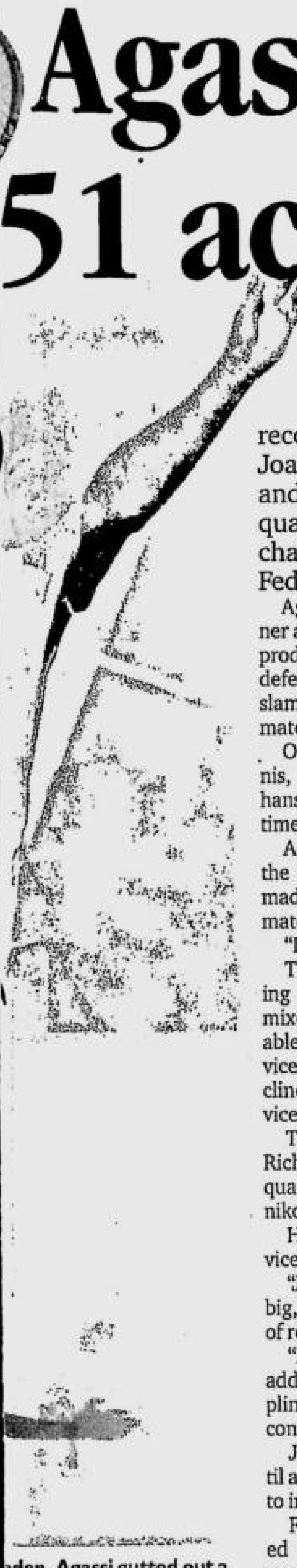
Agassi weathers Swede's 51 aces, sets Federer date



eden. Agassi gutted out a
Roger Federer. AFP

MELBOURNE, Australia—Andre Agassi overcame a record number of aces from Joachim Johannson on Sunday and set up an Australian Open quarterfinal against defending champion and top-ranked Roger Federer.

Agassi, an eight-time Grand Slam winner and four-time champion in Melbourne, produced one of his great performances to defeat the 6-foot-6 Johansson, who slammed 51 aces in their fourth-round match.

One of the best service returners in tennis, the 34-year-old Agassi endured Johansson's barrage, breaking him three times to win, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (5), 7-6 (3), 6-4.

Agassi dropped his own serve twice, at the start of the first and fourth sets, and made only 13 unforced errors in the match—none in the first set.

"It was a tough day," said Agassi.

The 11th-seeded Johansson was pushing the limits on almost every shot. He mixed 66 unforced errors with a remarkable 96 winners, including his aces and service winners. In the first tiebreaker, he clinched the opening set with a second service ace at 217 kph (135 mph).

The 22-year-old Johansson surpassed Richard Krajicek's mark of 49 aces in a quarterfinal loss to Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov at the 1999 US Open.

His final three aces came in his last service game.

"Joachim today was hitting the ball so big," Agassi said. "What can you do but sort of react?

"I was anxious the whole time," he added. "I had to stay focused and disciplined, give myself a look and hope I can convert on the few chances I do get."

Johansson didn't know of the record until after the match. He said he might be able to improve on it in the future.

Federer, whose 11 titles in 2004 included three majors, extended his winning streak to 25 matches with a 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (4) defeat of Marcos Baghdatis.

MARAT Safin yells in frustration against Belgium's Olivier Rochus. Safin, though, managed to eke out a hard-earned victory to advance to the quarterfinals AP

Marat Safin, who lost to Federer in last year's final here, converted just one of his 18 breakpoint chances in a fiery 4-6, 7-6 (1), 7-6 (5), 7-6 (2) win over Olivier Rochus that lasted 3 hours and 42 minutes.

Safin was given a code violation for spiking his racket into the court, twice for good measure, after wasting three opportunities to get back on serve in the fifth game of the third set.

After receiving the code violation from umpire Andreas Egli, he belted the broken racket three times on a drink cooler at the side of the court.

After growing increasingly frustrated with his error-strewn form, it all got too much for Safin in the third set as he squandered four opportunities for a break that would have cut Rochus' lead to 2-3.

Instead Rochus held serve after being 0-40 down and took a 4-1 lead. Safin cracked his racquet on the court to earn the violation.

"I was a little bit upset," Safin said afterward.

"He just didn't let me play. I kept getting so many break point opportunities but I just couldn't take them and that was irritating because I knew that it could be important. I let some anger out."

Safin's blow-up had followed several exchanges with Swiss chair umpire Egli, who had gently warned the 24-year-old to watch his language.

Yet just as it appeared Safin was about to hit the self-destruct button he rediscovered a semblance of composure.

He held serve and then broke Rochus to make it 4-3 before holding to level. The remainder of the set went with serve but Safin shaded the tie-break to take a crucial 2-1 lead.

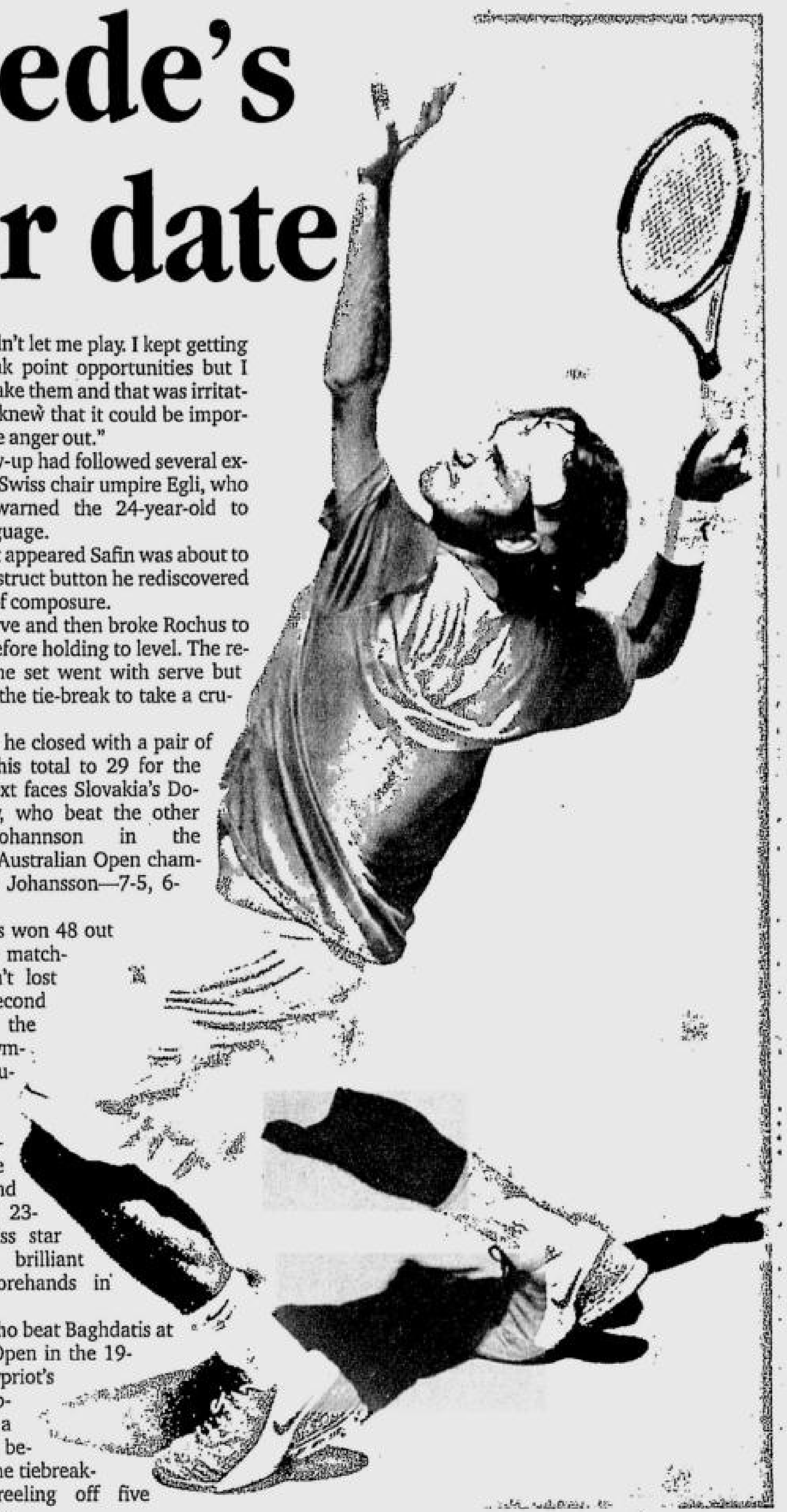
In the end, he closed with a pair of aces, taking his total to 29 for the match. He next faces Slovakia's Dominik Hrbaty, who beat the other Swedish Johannson in the draw—2002 Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson—7-5, 6-3, 6-1.

Federer has won 48 out of his last 50 matches, and hasn't lost since the second round at the Athens Olympics last August.

Baghdatis broke Federer's serve once and stunned the 23-year-old Swiss star with some brilliant crosscourt forehands in the third set.

Federer, who beat Baghdatis at the last US Open in the 19-year-old Cypriot's only other appearance at a major, fell behind 3-0 in the tiebreaker before reeling off five straight points.

"I enjoyed the battle for sure," said Federer. *AP, AFP*



TOP SEED Roger Federer serves against Marcos Baghdatis of Cyprus in their fourth round match. AFP

Aussie Open arena known to bring out worst in players

ears to spit as
during a break AP

MELBOURNE, Australia—Rod Laver Arena has often brought out the worst in players at the Australian Open.

On Sunday, Juan Ignacio Chela was fined $2,000 for unsportsmanlike conduct for spitting during his third-round center-court loss Saturday to Lleyton Hewitt.

Last year, France's Fabrice Santoro was seen spitting in the direction of an on-court official during a loss to Mark Philippoussis and was fined $1,500.

In 1990, John McEnroe was defaulted from his fourth-round match against Mikael Pernfors and fined $6,500 for his verbal abuse of Grand Prix supervisor Ken Farrar. It marked the first time that a player had been defaulted from a Grand Slam match.

Roger that, Lleyton

Lleyton Hewitt's fist pumps, yells of "Come on" and pointing toward his head and heart on key points have become a part of his on-court demeanor, often appearing to rile his opponents. But Roger Federer says leave Hewitt alone.

"I understand him," Federer said Sunday. "He wants to win this tournament so badly, and he's showing it.

"So what is 'tone it down?' Three 'come ons' less per match? That's not going to make the difference. He's fine the way he is."

Having said that, Federer admitted that Hewitt has annoyed him on court during previous matches.

"We've had all these tough matches in the past, he won too many of those," Federer said, smiling. "So, yeah, he did annoy me."

Good side, bad side

Andre Agassi had to endure a record 51 aces from his losing opponent, Sweden's Joachim Johansson, on Sunday in the fourth round at the Australian Open.

But after his four-set victory, Agassi—among the best returners of serve on the tour—said the good news was that he knew a Sydney inner-city tennis charity would benefit by AUS$100 per ace.

"I'm a team player, that's all I'm saying," said the smiling Agassi, who added 16 of his own. "I won't undermine his efforts and say I let a lot of them go by. I'll just say that all the money's going to a great cause."

A credit card company is donating the money. The 67 total aces in the match gave the charity AUS$6,700.

Marcos the Cypriot

They cheered at every opportunity—whether Marcos Baghdatis had won the point or lost it in his fourth-round match against Federer.

Mostly it was after the Cypriot qualifier had lost one.

The scoreline, however, made little difference. Decked out in blue and white, waving flags and chanting wildly, the group of eight made their presence felt in the Australian Open's center-court stadium.

"We come every day he plays. We're here to support him," said James Belias, 24, of the group, all from Melbourne and of Greek Cypriot heritage.

"I wasn't sure who was leading because they sang along like they were winning," Federer said of the Cypriot fans. "I always had to check the score and make sure I was actually winning."

Baghdatis appreciated the group's support.

"The crowd was crazy," he said. "They made me feel very comfortable, very confident." *AP*

va, Mauresmo lead women charge

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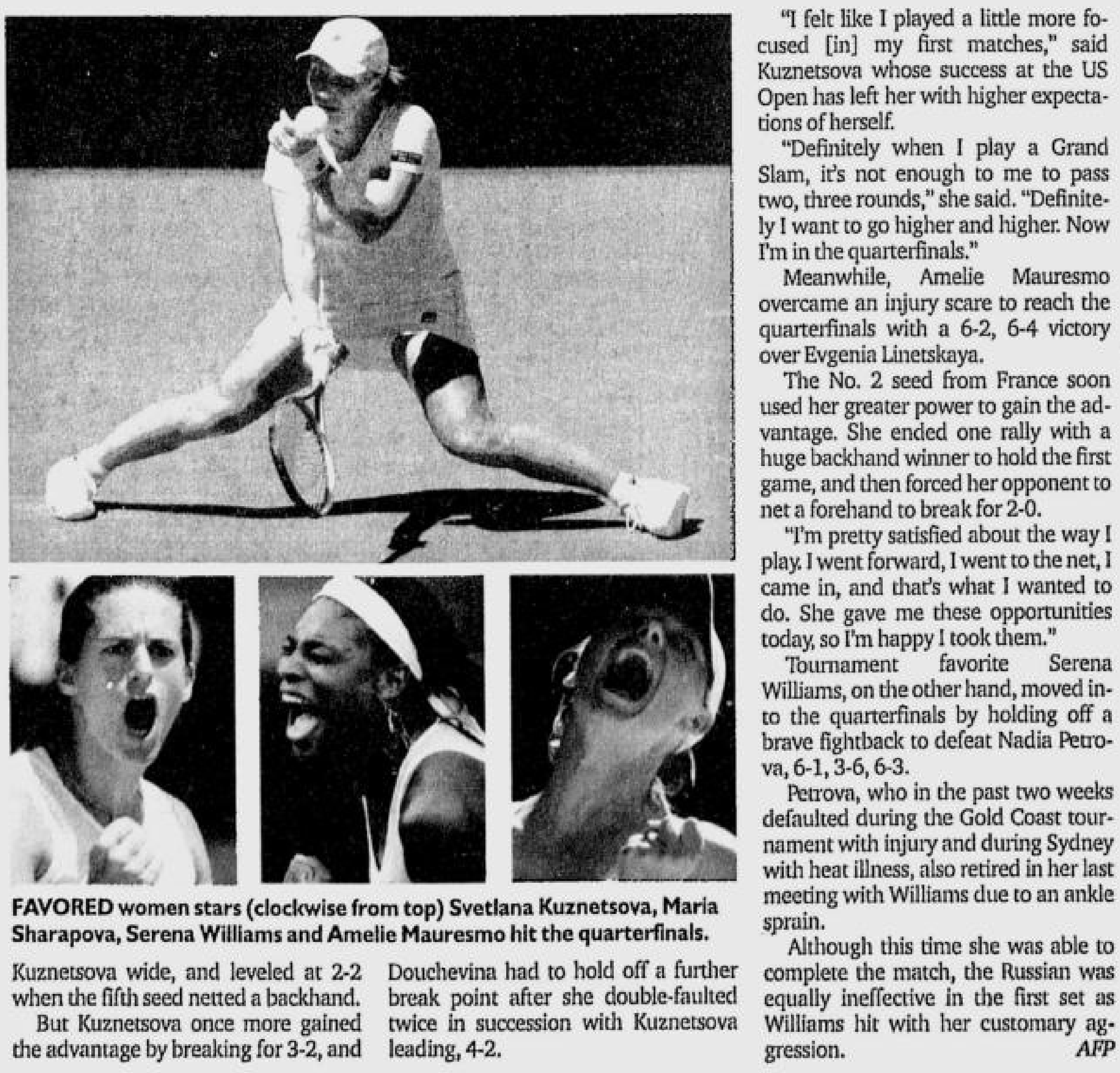

FAVORED women stars (clockwise from top) Svetlana Kuznetsova, Maria Sharapova, Serena Williams and Amelie Mauresmo hit the quarterfinals.

Kuznetsova wide, and leveled at 2-2 when the fifth seed netted a backhand.

But Kuznetsova once more gained the advantage by breaking for 3-2, and Douchevina had to hold off a further break point after she double-faulted twice in succession with Kuznetsova leading, 4-2.

"I felt like I played a little more focused [in] my first matches," said Kuznetsova whose success at the US Open has left her with higher expectations of herself.

"Definitely when I play a Grand Slam, it's not enough to me to pass two, three rounds," she said. "Definitely I want to go higher and higher. Now I'm in the quarterfinals."

Meanwhile, Amelie Mauresmo overcame an injury scare to reach the quarterfinals with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Evgenia Linetskaya.

The No. 2 seed from France soon used her greater power to gain the advantage. She ended one rally with a huge backhand winner to hold the first game, and then forced her opponent to net a forehand to break for 2-0.

"I'm pretty satisfied about the way I play. I went forward, I went to the net, I came in, and that's what I wanted to do. She gave me these opportunities today, so I'm happy I took them."

Tournament favorite Serena Williams, on the other hand, moved into the quarterfinals by holding off a brave fightback to defeat Nadia Petrova, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

Petrova, who in the past two weeks defaulted during the Gold Coast tournament with injury and during Sydney with heat illness, also retired in her last meeting with Williams due to an ankle sprain.

Although this time she was able to complete the match, the Russian was equally ineffective in the first set as Williams hit with her customary aggression. *AFP*

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RP boxers capture 2 gold medals

HANOI—The Philippines came through with two gold medals Friday night and finished first runner-up in the Southeast Asian Amateur Boxing Championships here.

Flyweight Warlito Parrenas beat the odds to hack out a 9-7 decision against his Vietnamese opponent before bantamweight Joan Tipon salvaged a 15-11 points win over his rival from Thailand that earned him the tournament's best boxer award.

The two gold medals plus the bronze of light flyweight Lyvhen Salazar gave the three-man RP Alaxan FR Boxing Team, coached by Elmer Pamisa, second place in the team competition behind the hosts.

It was a big win for Parrenas, who trailed the Vietnamese in the first round before the Filipino moved ahead with a hit-and-run tactic at the end of the second round.

The Vietnamese tried to rally in the fourth round but Parrenas held his ground.

In contrast, Tipon boxed according to plan and took a big margin after two rounds.

When the Thai rallied to within 9-11, Tipon, the 2003 Vietnam Southeast Asian Games silver medalist, stepped up his pace to dominate his rival who was given a standing eight-count in the fourth round.

The RP team's trip was sponsored by the Pacific Heights with support from the Philippine Sports Commission as part of the buildup for the coming Southeast Asian games this November.

The campaign also kicked off the four-year Amateur Boxing Association (Abap) program leading to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Pamisa cited the three boxers for their effort in giving the Philippines big honor.

"They performed very well. The two gold medals are products of the Abap grassroots program," Pamisa said.

Tapia decisions Bentz

HIDALGO, Texas—Johnny Tapia outpointed Nicky Bentz in a 10-round featherweight bout Saturday night.

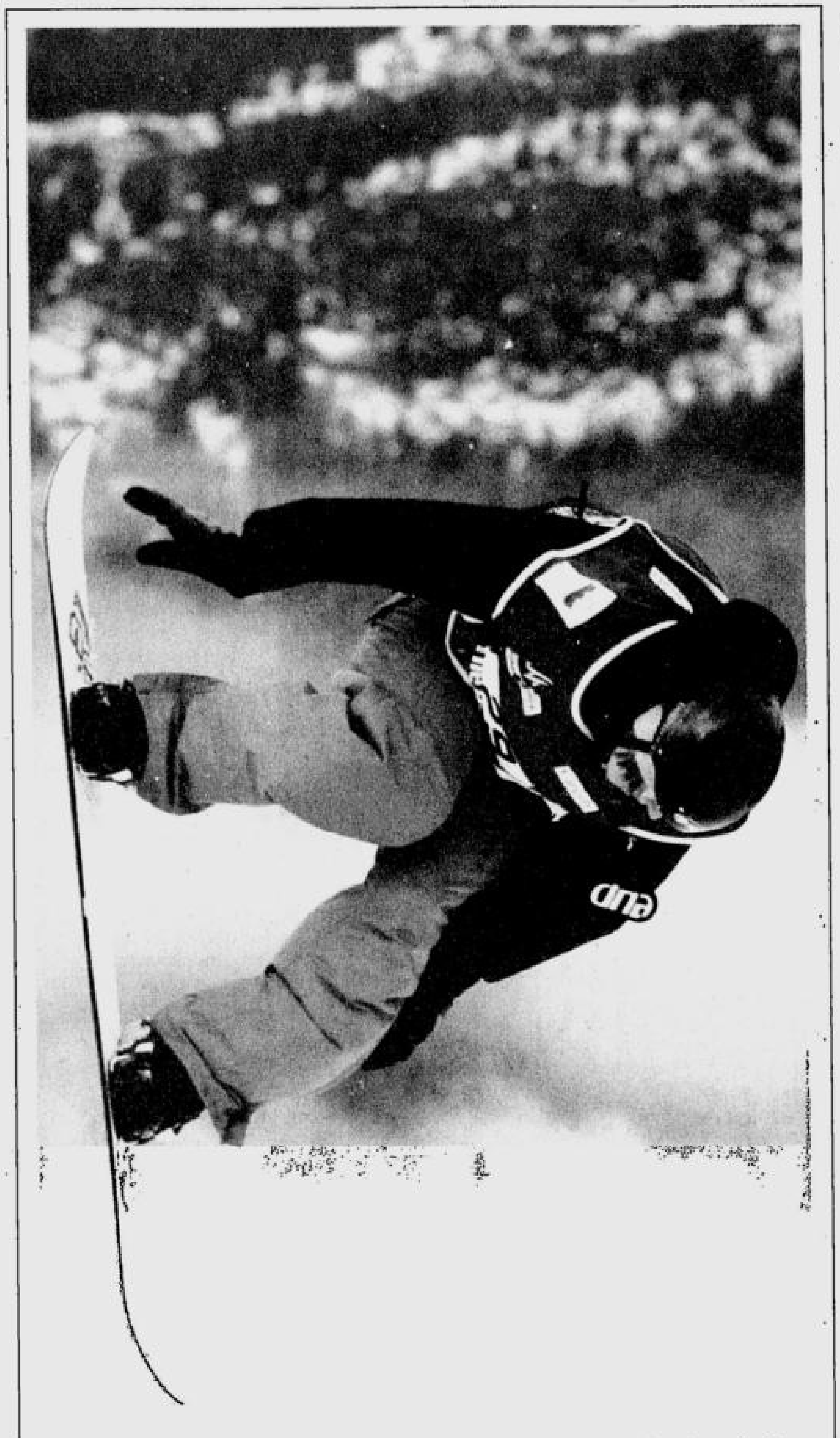
Judges scored the match billed as the "Battle of the Border" 98-92, 92-97 and 96-93 for Tapia, who is trying for his sixth world title.

Tapia (55-4-1) and Bentz (34-4) were both tentative in the early rounds. Each took short jabs at the other before Tapia began to make his move in the fourth.

Tapia worked the midsection and head as he kept Bentz against the ropes. Bentz countered with a heavy punch, working his way out of trouble each time.

Tapia landed combinations throughout the fight, but Bentz kept coming back with shots to the head.

Tapia lost a point in the eighth round for hitting Bentz below the waist. He previously had received a warning in the sixth round. *AP*



SNOW BOARDING CHAMPIONSHIP: Finland's Risto Mattila soars above low clouds during the Men's Big Air at the FIS World Snowboarding Championships in Whistler, British Columbia Jan. 21. REUTERS

Strong RP chess bid in SEAG

ARROYO

KOK

AFTER the First Gentleman made the first move, chess chief Go Teng Kok vowed to ensure a strong campaign when the country hosts the 2005 Southeast Asian Games this November.

"With no less than First Gentleman Mike Arroyo as our sports godfather, we are committed to more than do good in the SEA Games. And we owe it to our countrymen to live up to the promise of chess emerging as one of the most productive in the gold medals race," said Go.

With the P4 million pledged by Mr. Arroyo, the National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) has lined up at least 15 qualifying tournaments all over the country and a Grandmaster Classic featuring six super GMs and GMs from other countries, four Filipino GMs and four local International Masters.

From the national qualifying, the NCFP hopes to get the best and most promising to join the star-studded national pool in the grand qualifying tournament in Manila where the top finishers compete with the local GMs in the finals.

"We're looking at getting the best from some 300 chess players all over the country. This early, I declare that only the best Filipino chess players will carry the national flag in the SEA Games," Go said.

The NCFP has submitted the list of qualifying legs to the First Gentleman Foundation for Sports and Medalyang Ginto executive director Tessa Mangahas as well as its SEA Games training program "as a courtesy and assurance that their support are being used wisely."

"Every cent coming from the First Gentleman and other generous sponsors will go to the athletes' training. I would like to thank Mr. Arroyo, Ms Mangahas and others for making sure that our training expenses are now covered. And we will repay them by bringing glory to the Philippines," said Go.

The NCFP is also looking for more backers, including the Philippine Sports Commission now headed by OIC Butch Ramirez, to keep GMs Joey Antonio, Eugene Torre, Nelson Mariano and Bong Villamayor and GM hopeful Mark Paragua and some top IMs busy in international tournaments.

Go has set up a meeting with the national chess players to deliver the following message he gave to Filipino tracksters as president of the Philippine Track and Field Association.

"The SEA Games in the Philippines is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us. We must not wait for some 10 years more to play our best. When our neighbors come here to compete, let us make sure that most of the gold medals will stay here."

UST spikers edge Letran, keep lead

GAMES TOMORROW
(Rizal Memorial Coliseum)
3 p.m.—FEU vs San Sebastian
5 p.m.—PSC vs Lyceum

KATE Co Yu Kang stepped up when top hitter Roxanne Pimentel wavered as defending champion University of Santo Tomas edged hard-fighting Letran College, 19-25, 25-22, 25-15, 21-25, 19-17, to stay on top of the Shakey's V-League second conference at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

With Pimentel checked all game long, Co Yu Kang fired up her team with an array of shots—from powerful outside spikes to deceiving dinks and drops—to explode with her season-high 26 hits, all coming from attacks as the Tigresses sealed their 10th win in 11 outings.

Pimentel, who averaged more than 20 points a game, managed to sneak in 16 hits despite the Lady Knights' awesome blocking up front while first conference MVP Mary Jean Balse and Venus Bernal added 15 apiece.

The event is being backed by Shakey's Pizza and co-presented by Dunkin Donuts, HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives, Smart and PLDT with Mikasa and Accel as official volleyball and outfitter, respectively.

"This is what we call law of averages because we peaked early," said UST coach August Sta. Maria. "I hope that our bad games would be over before the semifinals."

Playing superb net defense and solid reception game absent in a disappointing 17-25, 16-25, 20-25 loss to UST in the first round, Letran roared to a fine start by taking the first set, faltered in the next two sets before forcing a decider.

The Muralla-based belles blinked first after falling into a maze of errors that enabled the España-based spikers to come out of a 7-7 deadlock with a 14-7 lead, a point away from clinching the victory.

But Letran didn't give up, fought six match points to knot the count at 15-all and moved a point away from pulling off the earthshaking upset after grabbing a 16-15 edge following a long Bernal kill.

A Bernal kill and a two-man block by Balse and Rubie de Leon on Bangladesh Pantaleon gave back UST a 17-16 edge, an advantage that was quickly erased after a Vida Rica Gutierrez serve went way past the baseline for another deadlock at 17-17.

It turned out to be the Lady Knights' last show of resistance as the Tigresses took the next two points on a Bernal block on Joan Botor-Carpio and a service error by Botor-Carpoo for the win.

"Sayang," said FEU coach Nes Pamilar. "Pero I'm happy with how the girls played, they fought really hard and I'm proud of them.

Despite the loss, Letran remained at No. 4 spot with a 5-5 (win-loss) card behind UST, back-to-back UAAP titlist La Salle and Philippine Sports Commission and ahead of No. 5 Lyceum, which has a 4-6 slate.

Cherry Rose Macatangay was Letran's source of strength at the net as she pumped in 28 kills to end up with a game-high 32 points, but it was Botor-Carpio's all-around effort and leadership that gave the Tigresses most of the problems.

In the other game, La Salle needed a fourth and extra set to trounce San Sebastian, 25-17, 22-25, 25-16, 25-23, and close in on pace-setter UST. It was the Lady Archers' ninth straight triumph in 10 outings while the Lady Stags suffered their 10th loss against a win.

PBA needs quality imports this time around

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THESE are bad times in the Philippine Basketball Association.

While it is true that the competition never stops among its member-teams, the pro league is still not making any progress. For example, as a longtime PBA fan, I have noticed the poor turnout in recent months of most of the games compared with the usual banner crowd who watched the series in the past. I have also noticed a sharp decline in crowd attendance at the cavernous Araneta Coliseum where one can see rows and rows of empty seats even during supposedly interesting games.

What gives?

At the moment, PBA Commissioner Noli Eala has plenty of problems to solve. Eala is not in for a picnic. Since he replaced Jun Bernardino in 2003, Eala is facing not only dwindling gate receipts, but also many other problems such as the "Fil-shams" controversy, the ticklish drug scandal, the lack of a permanent venue, complaints against biased officiating, staging the ill-fated foreign-flavored Invitationals which was a box-office flop and so on and so forth.

The PBA can ill afford to lose the patronage of the legions of its basketball fans this season. For starters in the next conference, the fans are looking forward to watching quality imports in action. As far as I can recall, the PBA enjoyed unprecedented following during its early years because of the presence of top-caliber imports like Cyrus Mann and Billy Ray Bates of Crispa, Toyota's Byron "Snake" Jones, Norman Black, Shell's Bobby Parks, Michael Hackett and Pop Cola's Tony Harris, who scored a single-game record of 105 points which has remained unmatched in the 30-year history of the PBA. Harris saw action here in 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1998-99.

In the beginning, these imports generated much interest in the way they dominated the PBA, drawing the crowd by the thousands. But in early 2000, these imports, who were initially considered as the solution to the problem, became the problem themselves for showing repugnant behavior.

Sometime in April 2002, imports Lamont Strothers and Mario Bennett of San Miguel figured in an ugly display of basketball "hooliganism." The ill-tempered Strothers chased and cursed referee Franco Ilagan and later threw the ball into the upper box section of the Araneta Coliseum and took off his jersey. Bennett also joined the fray, showing his disrespect to the PBA and the public by likewise taking off his shirt.

"This (unsportsmanlike behavior) is something the fans wouldn't want to see," said the TV analyst after this show of rudeness and arrogance.

Earlier that month, Robert Parker of Sta. Lucia made us angry when he argued and pointed his finger at coach Adonis Tierra during a game because the player's public display of disrespect to his Filipino coach sent the wrong message to the fans. Another Sta. Lucia import, Damien Owens, made us boiling mad when it was reported that he touched the behind of a pretty Filipina in a disco joint.

Then last July 2002 at the Cuneta Astrodome, SMB import Art Long figured in an ugly incident by punching Red Bull import Tony Lang and threatening to throw a chair at the crowd. Long was sent home by San Miguel management and replaced by Terquin Mott, who, unfortunately, also became another problem for coach Jong Uichico after Mott slammed the ball on Lang's head and assaulted the latter on their way to the dugout of the Big Dome during the halftime break.

In 2004, Long committed another misconduct when he attacked Marlou Aquino of Sta. Lucia. He was fined a measly P20,000, something which I felt was too light. Long should have been fined heavily and suspended for life in the PBA for his repeated temper tantrums on the playing court.

Much later in 2004, Talk 'N Text import Jerald Honeycutt condemned himself to public vilification when he slammed the ball on the head of a US pro-am player without provocation during the quarterfinals of the PBA Fiesta Conference. Then, in full view of fans and those watching on TV, Honeycutt's teammate, Asi Taulava , joined the fracas when he was not supposed to do so. Both were ejected from the game, which TNT won, 127-115.

I say Honeycutt and Taulava need not resort to foul means to achieve their goals because their misconduct did the sport and the PBA more harm than good. Hotheads have no place in sports.

SPORTSWATCH

GCAP 7-cock derby tonight

BIG-TIME cockfighting resumes at the fully air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum today when the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 7-Cock Derby gets going at 6 p.m. Sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Attention will be focused on at least eight participants who are fresh from a successful campaign in the recent World Slasher Cup: Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza (Winning Time Jobo), Jet Fernando (JSF), *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio (Complexor 3000), Sonny Lagon and his American partner Bruce Barnette (Blue Blade San Lorenzo), Gov. Ito Ynares (Binangonan), Boy de Roca and Pepito Ngo (Bong Pet) Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo (PEBR Mulawin) and Rudy Albano (Mulawin A). Slated today is the elimination round (3-cock).

San Pablo Cockpit opening

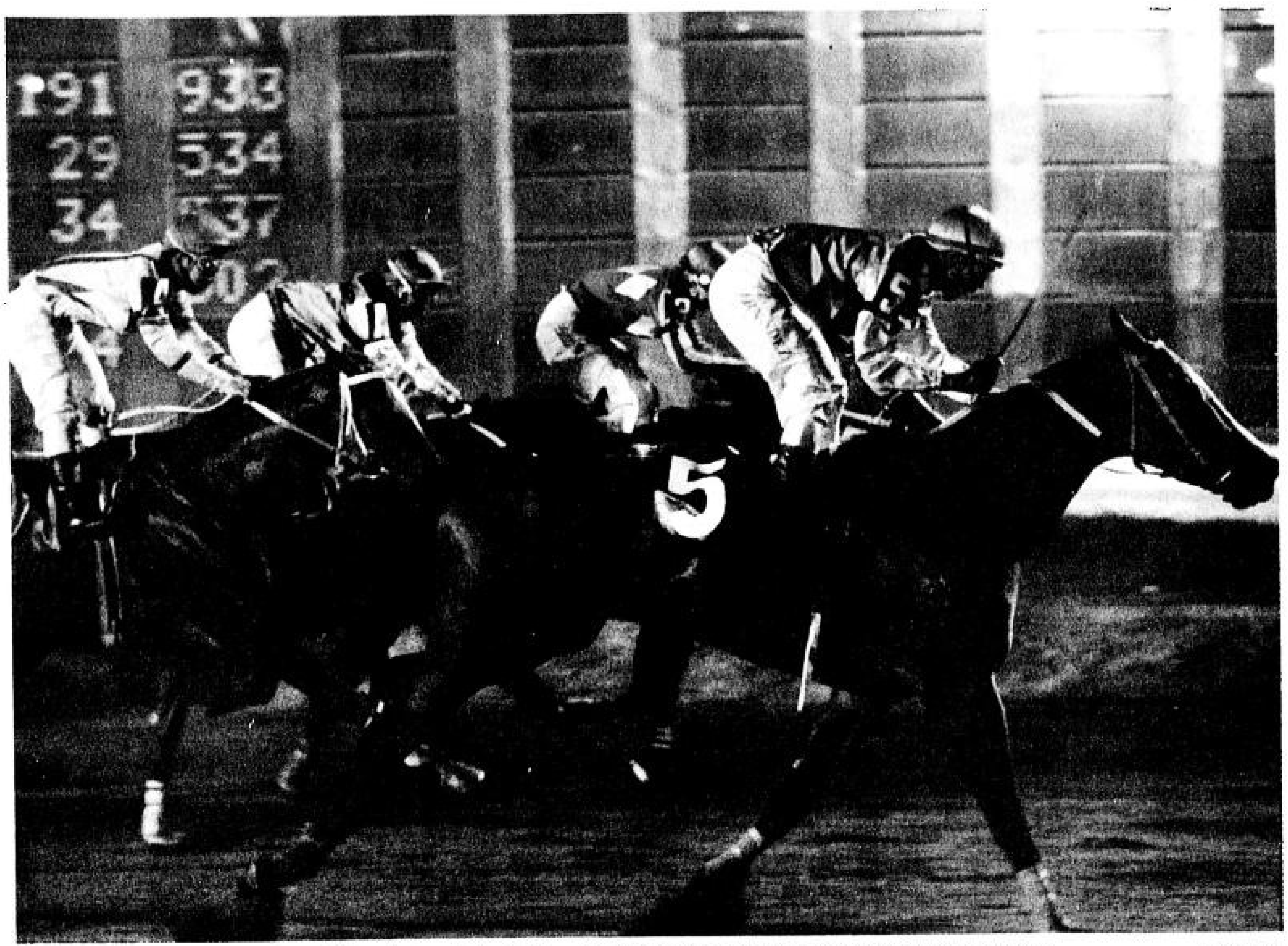
THE NEWLY built San Pablo Cockpit Arena in San Pablo, Isabela, will have its grand opening on Monday, simultaneous with the staging of the Invitational 3-Cock Derby to be participated in by at least 50 prominent cockers and breeders. To be hosted by former Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Rodolfo Palattao, the derby has attracted the likes of Jun Topacio and American partner Kelly Green, Mayor Jessie Castillo, brothers Patrick Antonio and Mayor Bong Antonio of Alcala, Cagayan, lawyer Ferdie Topacio, Mike Jamisola and engineer Gody Julian. The derby is being held in cooperation with San Pablo Mayor Jojo Miro Jr., Joven Pinson, Dr. Amante Valdepenas and the San Pablo Cockers Association. For details, contact Dr. Valdepenas (0926-7541338),

BM Bulalaw tops World Slasher

BOY Marzo's BM Bulalaw entry scored 6.5 points to bag the championship of the just-concluded 2005 World Slasher Cup 8-Stag International Derby. Marzo, a Thunderbird Power Feeds user, particularly Thunderbird Platinum & Thundebrird Enertone, first won against Binangonan Balbina of Danding Cojuangco and Spitting Dragon during the Jan. 18 elimination. It defeated PEBR Complexor 3000 Mulawin of Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo in the semis, then drew with Firefly Thunderbird-13 of Jun Santiago. Carrying 3.5 points into the finals, Marzo lost to Joe Firefly Thunderbird-12 of Jun Santiago, then conquered Mike Romulo's Kalookan Queen. In its seventh fight, Bulalaw ripped Winning Time Jobo of Rudy Salud. In its eighth fight, Bulalaw bested Patrick Antonio's Complexor 3000 Firefly-14 for the championship.

Cover Girl snares PRC opening leg

Sweet redemption is worth ₱300,000



JOCKEY Hernandez steers Cover Girl to victory in the firs leg of the Santa Ana Park Championship Series yesterday. REM ZAMORA

By Edwin Villanueva,
Contributor

COVER Girl was overshadowed by her stablemate West Bound in last year's two season-ending major races but the champion 3-year-old filly made sure the first stakes event of 2005 would be hers.

Darting through the stretch with might, Cover Girl caught Empire King in the last strides to the payoff wire to capture the opening leg of the Santa Ana Park Championship series by half a length last night.

West Bound checked in third, another length behind, with Red Star Rising coming up short in the 1,600-meter race to salvage fourth spot, two lengths off the winner.

The victory worth P300,000 was a redemption of sort for Cover Girl, who landed third in the Classic Open won by West Bound and only sixth in the Presidential Gold Cup ruled by Empire King.

"*Naisahan din sila. Maganda ang sunod kaya nang pakawalan ko buong-buo* (We beat them at last. She was well placed that when I asked her to run she responded solidly)," said star jockey Jonathan Hernandez of the chestnut daughter of Khozaam out of Gallant Native.

Although Cover Girl failed in the PGC and Classic Open, she stamped herself as the top 3-year-old filly in 2004 by scoring big wins in the Cojuangco Cup, Marho and Philtobo 3YO Championships and the Lakambini Stakes.

Cover Girl had American Woman to thank for in the thrilling win.

The Aussie import made the race miserable for Empire King, who labored to grab the lead while Cover Girl simply watched from within range of the leaders.

Hernandez sent Cover Girl in contention at the top of the stretch just as West Bound and Red Star Rising, rallying from dead last and making the widest turn, made their patented rush for home.

Empire King, unraced since ruling the PGC last Dec. 12, tried to hold off the on-rushing Cover Girl, who was simply unstoppable this time.

Cover Girl, sent away as the slight co-favorite with West Bound, negotiated the first of the six-leg series staged by the Philippine Racing Club in 1 minute, 41.6 seconds (25-24.5-24-28).

American Woman eventually faded to fifth then came Stowaway Lass and Sound Offer.

Philracom chair Jimmy Dilag was joined in the awarding rites by commissioner Vergel Cruz, and top PRCI officials Ramon Ereneta, Jude Hilay and Allan Abesamis.

Sound Offer was first out of the gates but was quickly dispatched by American Woman as Empire King jumped to third, towing Cover Girl, West Bound and Stowaway Lass while Red Star Rising brought up the rear.

A heated tussle for first ensued between American Woman and Empire King entering the far turn, making them sitting ducks for Cover Girl when they straightened out for home.

The second leg of the series is tentatively set for March 6.

RP coaching staff gets Black, Cone to boost ABC campaign

CONE

BLACK

REYES

NOT ONLY Jong Uichico but Tim Cone and Norman Black as well.

All three coaches of the national team to the last three Asian Games will be actively involved in helping Vincent "Chot" Reyes guide the Philippine team back to its old place of prominence in the region starting with the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) championship this year.

Cone of Alaska and Black, who captured nine of his 10 coaching titles while calling the shots for San Miguel Beer, are considered valuable additions to the national team coaching staff headed by Reyes along with SMB head coach Uichico.

Earlier tapped by Reyes to serve as one of his deputies, Uichico came close to beating South Korea before the PBA-backed national team ended up fourth in the 2002 Busan Asian Games.

Cone steered the RP Centennial team to a bronze medal in the 1998 Bangkok Asiad while Black also missed the bronze as coach of the 1994 national team composed mostly of San Miguel Beer players in the Hiroshima Asian Games.

Reyes said Black, a top import of the league in his prime, would fine-tune the individual skills of the players while Cone would act as team adviser and consultant.

Uichico is expected to lend his expertise by following the day-to-day operation of the RP squad.

Perry Ronquillo, Shell's former coach who recently migrated to the United States, was also being considered to further strengthen the coaching staff of the national team, which already has Coca-Cola's Aboy Castro, Binky Favis of Barangay Ginebra and Boysie Zamar on board.

"Perry and I are in constant touch. We're nearing an agreement but nothing's final yet," said Reyes, who also has Danny Da Rosas, one of two level 2 trainers in the country, as trainer and an international conditioning specialist.

Meanwhile, the Coca-Cola management has appointed Eric Altamirano as the Tigers' interim coach to allow Reyes to concentrate on his job.

Altamirano will have Biboy Ravanes and Nash Racela as assistant coaches.

Reyes said he's flying to Seoul, South Korea together with Castro on Wednesday at the earliest to watch the China-South Korea Goodwill Games on Jan. 28.

Reyes and Castro will then go to Harbin, China, on Jan. '30 to watch the China leg of the goodwill series where they expect to see the up-and-coming Chinese national team players in action.

Tang Sheng Dong, a 7-foot-1 youth standout, is expected to debut for the men's team while Xu Feng, a 6-foot-4 point guard being groomed for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, will play his first international game.

"It's important for us to have a glimpse of these players. They are already playing tune-up games while we're still in the process of forming our national team," said Reyes.

Reyes added that while majority of the national team aspirants had undergone the physical tests, the four Talk 'N Text players—Willie Miller, Jimmy Alapag, Mark Telan and Yancy De Ocampo—have yet to go through the tests. *June Navarro*

Former Bull Burrell signs with Japan's Hitachi team

BURRELL

TOKYO—Former Chicago Bulls forward Scott Burrell has signed with the Hitachi Sunrockers of Japanese basketball's professional Super League, team officials said Sunday.

The 34-year-old Burrell played in 80 games for the Bulls in 1997 and also has NBA experience with the former Charlotte Hornets and the Golden State Warriors.

"I'm looking forward to helping this team make the playoffs," Burrell said in a statement released by the team. "It's a team with a lot of speed and that's the type of basketball that I like."

Burrell, who played in China in 2003 and in the Philippines—where he played for the Red Bull Barako—last season, will join a team that is last in the eight-team Super League with a 4-14 record.

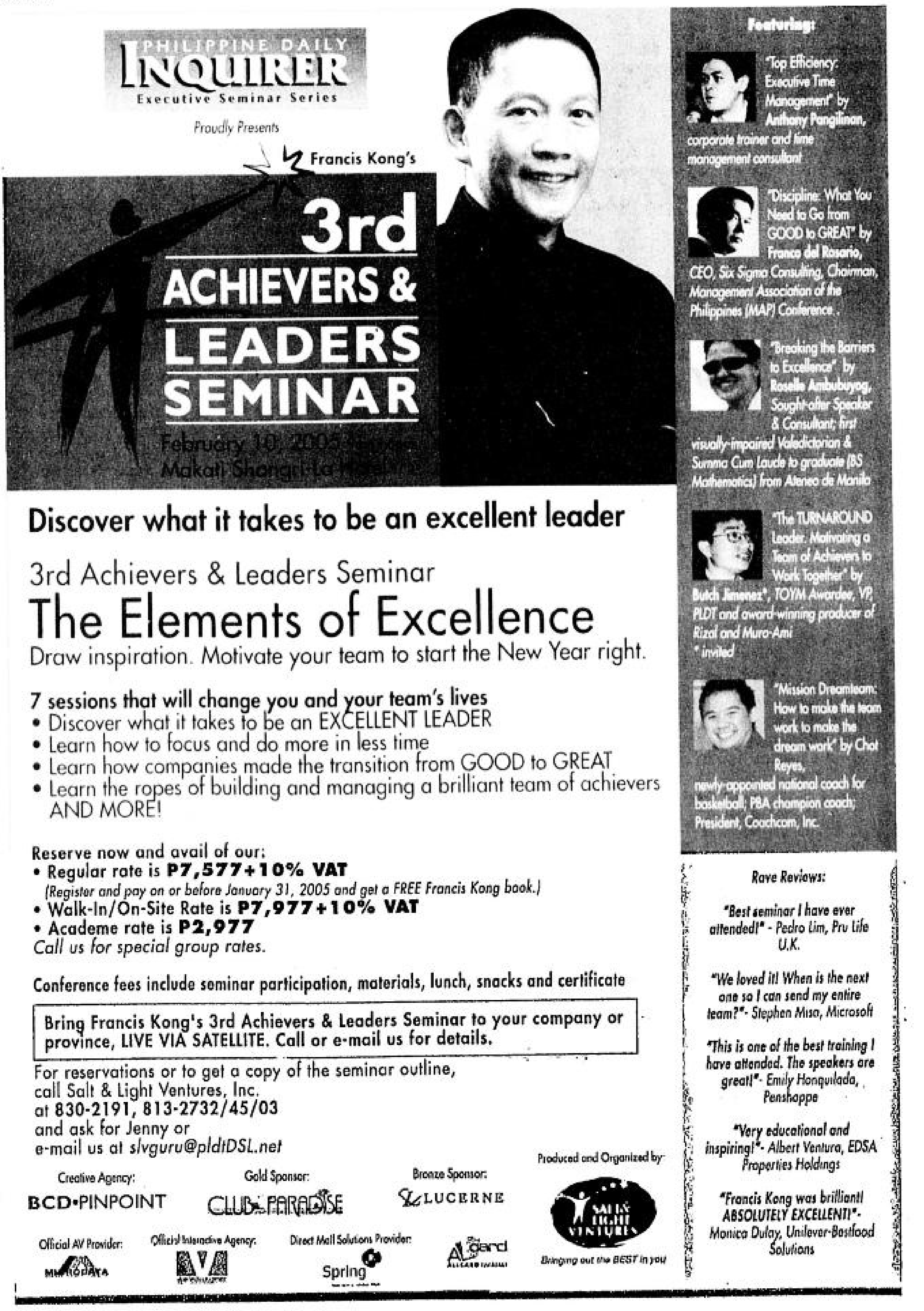
Revilla, Pagdanganan head PSA Forum guests Tuesday

SEN. Ramon 'Bong' Revilla and Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Philsoc) Chair Roberto Pagdanganan are among the guests appearing in Tuesday's session of the PSA Forum at the Manila Pavilion.

International matchmaker Jun Sarreal will accompany Sen. Revilla to the 10:30 a.m. session sponsored by Red Bull, Agfa Colors and Pagcor as part of the boxing card featuring Rodel Mayol's defense of his Orient Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) minimumweight crown against Indonesian Marti Polh.

Both Mayol and Pohl will also be appearing in the weekly forum.

Pagdanganan is the guest in the second part of the session as he talks about the country's preparations for the Manila Southeast Asian Games set late this year.



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"Mission Dreamteam: How to make the team work to make the dream work" by Chot Reyes, newly-appointed national coach for basketball; PBA champion coach; President, Coachcom, Inc.

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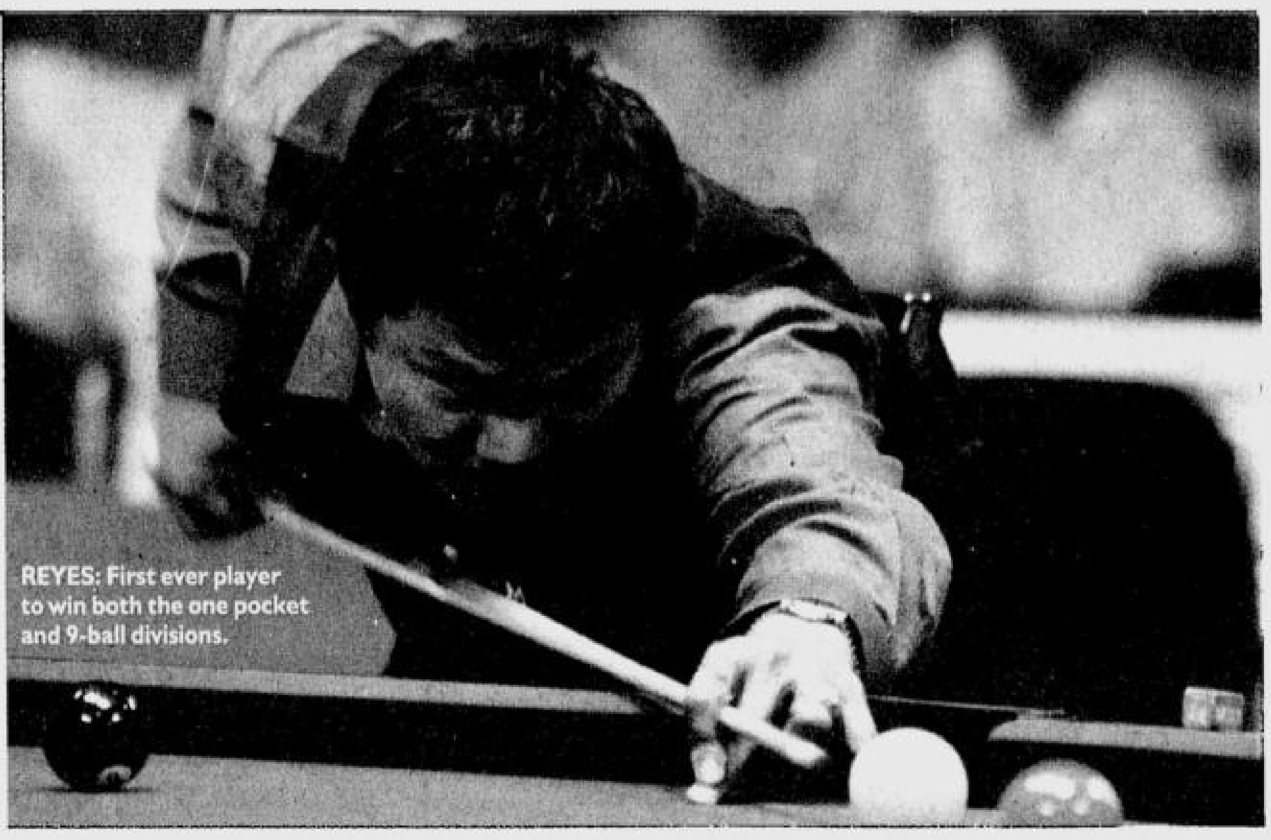
REYES: First ever player to win both the one pocket and 9-ball divisions.

Reyes scores rare US double victory

EFREN "Bata" Reyes pulled off a rare victory double in the 2005 annual Derby City Classic yesterday, outclassing American James Baraks in the finals, 7-1, to win the 9-Ball Division at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Filipino billiards ace came back from a 10th-round loss to win five successive matches and top the event a day after retaining his One Pocket Division crown.

With his performance, the 50-year-old from Angeles City, Pampanga, won the coveted "Master of the Table" title and a bonus prize of $20,000.

Reyes, the 1999 World Pool champion in Cardiff, was given up for lost after bowing to German ace Andreas Roschkowski in the 10th round of the 9-Ball event.

But he demolished Los Angeles bet George Breedlove (husband of famous lady cue ace Jeannete "The Black Widow" Lee), Baraks and Robb Saez, and then blanked 2001 World Pool Cardiff ruler Mika "The Iceman" Immonen of Finland, 7-0, in the hot-seat match to arrange a titular showdown with Baraks.

The 2004 Big Orange Classic II winner Baraks of Rock Island, Illinois, blasted Saez, 7-1, in the semis to force the rematch with the Filipino pool superstar.

"I was lucky in the semifinal against Mika, but I played really good in the final," said Reyes. "The key for me was breaking well. I found a way to make a ball on every break, so I aimed for the same and played at the same speed every time."

Reyes finished second behind former world pool titlist Ralf "Kaiser" Souquet of Germany in the 2004 edition of the 9-Ball Division.

"I'm 50, so I don't know how long I can play this good, so this is great," added Reyes.

Justyn Barnes, InsidePOOL staff member, said it was the first time a player has won both the one pocket and 9-ball division since the tournament's inception in 1999.

Bank Division winner American David Matlock took second place in the "Master of the Table" race while compatriot Corey Deuel, beaten by Reyes in the finals of the one pocket division, 3-1, settled for third place.

In the semifinals, Reyes was the slight underdog against the well-rested Immonen, a frequent Manila visitor who had two byes on the final day. But the New York-based Finn's luck ran out against Reyes.

In the other semifinal, a long wait for dinner at a local restaurant and heavy traffic caused Saez to arrive 15 minutes late for his match with Baraks. Saez never looked comfortable, and the cool-stroking Illinois cue man ran out an easy 7-1 victor.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

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Dableo, Gonzales' finals seeding up to NCFP board

DABLEO

DUE TO their strong records and credentials, reigning Asian zonal champion and Grandmaster candidate Ronald Dableo and fellow GM hopeful Jayson Gonzales may be seeded in the finals of a three-stage qualifying round to decide the Philippine chess team for the Manila Southeast Asian Games this November.

Wilfredo "Willie" Abalos, NCFP director, yesterday said the two International Masters (IMs) had a chance to earn a seat in the finals along with the seeded crew made up of GMs Eugene Torre, Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr., Buenaventura "Bong" Villamayor, Nelson Mariano II and GM candidate Mark Paragua, the country's No. 1 player with an ELO rating of 2586.

Abalos said a decision on the fate of the two will be made during the NCFP board meeting on Feb. 28 although he noted that both players had posted outstanding performances in the past.

Dableo and Gonzales were members of the 2003 SEAG team that competed in Vietnam. They also clinched gold medals in the lower boards for the Tagaytay City-RP squad that won the 14th Asian cities tournament.

Even Torre had expressed hopes that the two be given berths in the finals

Abalos was designated as co-project director with NCFP vice president Romeo Seratubias and PRO Mila Emperado in the planned three-stage qualifying round that will select who will join the seeded players in the finals.

In a decision hailed by many, the NCFP under new president Go Teng Kok opted to conduct a free-for-all battle for slots in the national team, in the process junking the "traditional outright seeded policy" which was a source of gripes by certain players in the past.

The Philippines won three golds and two bronze medals when chess made its debut in Vietnam with Paragua emerging as the most bemedaled Filipino with three gold medals.

The Vietnamese swept the four golds staked in the distaff side. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Sevillano 2nd in US tilt

CEBUANO International Master Enrico "Ikong" Sevillano clinched second place in the just-concluded 2005 Western Class Chess Championships at the LAX Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, California, USA.

The Nevada-based Sevillano scored 5.0 points on five wins and a loss to finish behind eventual champion IM Melikset Khachiyan of the United States with 5.5 points.

Sevillano won over Tanauan, Batangas, native and US Master Reynaldo "Rey" del Pilar, Gregg Small, David Zimbeck, Grasuh Manukyan and Robby Adamson. His lone defeat came at the hands of US Master Michael Casella in the second round. *NM Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

MIKE Tan, 18

RYZA Cenon, 17

LJ Reyes, 17

CJ Muere, 16

Finally there are only the Final 4

By Carmela Teresa Almonte

FOUR hopefuls edged closer to fame and fortune last Friday night as the GMA 7 talent search, "StarStruck" announced its Final Four during a live telecast from the SM Megamall Cinema 4.

And the Final Four are Ryza Cenon, LJ Reyes, CJ Muere and Mike Tan, who will battle it out for the title Ultimate StarStruck Survivor.

Megan Young and Kirby de Jesus were eliminated Friday night. Kirby is the estranged son of former Hagibis member Bernie Fineza.

Mike, 18, who once almost entered the seminary, said he had always wanted to join the talent search but was just "waiting for someone to prod me." Two of his friends finally made him audition for the talent search with them.

"I never thought I would make it to the top 12," Mike said in Filipino during a press conference at the Podium right after the selection of the Final Four. "But since I've made it this far, I'll just do my best."

Mike was in second year in Industrial Technology at the Rizal Technological University in Mandaluyong when he joined the talent search. Asked to compare himself to CJ, whom he will fight for the male title of Ultimate StarStruck Survivor, Mike said he is the "more serious" of the two, while CJ is the "more focused."

CJ was actually booted out of the competition last December but was brought back after a "grand switch," where an Avenger, an eliminated contestant, replaced one of the Survivors. This time, Benj Pacia, 16, was eliminated instead.

CJ said that if he wins, he would donate part of the P1 million prize—apart from the millions worth of exclusive management contract—to two churches in San Pablo, Laguna, and Alaminos, Pangasinan.

But it's still a long way from victory and cash for the second batch of the Final Four, who have more challenges and intense tests to go through in acting, dancing, singing and hosting. Last year's winners are Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras, and runners-up Yasmien Kurdi and Rainier Castillo.

LJ is a 17-year-old Gelli de Belen dead ringer. Mike admitted he courted LJ before he was forced to stop by strict "StarStruck" rules against dating fellow contestants.

LJ admitted she is pressured by people's expectations of her. *"Parang hindi po ako makapag*-concentrate," she said.

LJ and her mother agreed that if LJ wins, her mom will come home to the Philippines for good. Her mother has been in the US, working as a bookkeeper since LJ was in grade six. LJ's parents are separated and she met her Chinese father for the first time only when she was in second year high school. She and her elder sister were raised by their grandmother.

Ryza, 17, the fourth Survivor, is an AMA Computer Learning Center student who wishes to be a computer programmer if she doesn't win "StarStruck."

The competition takes an interesting turn this week as the drama-anthology "Magpakailanman," hosted by Mel Tiangco, takes the "StarStruck" time slot Monday through Thursday, with Ryza, LJ, CJ and Mike acting out their life stories on the series. Gina Alajar will direct with Jun Lana writing the script.

The Magpakailanman episodes will still be part of the StarStruck judging process and the Final Four will be evaluated for their performance on the show. Thirty-five percent of the finalists' scores come from the StarStruck council made up of director Louie Ignacio, actor Christopher de Leon, and comedian Joey de Leon. Another 35 percent hinges on the rating of StarStruck experts that vary each week, while 30 percent depends on text votes from viewers.

The talent search will culminate in the grand finals in late February.

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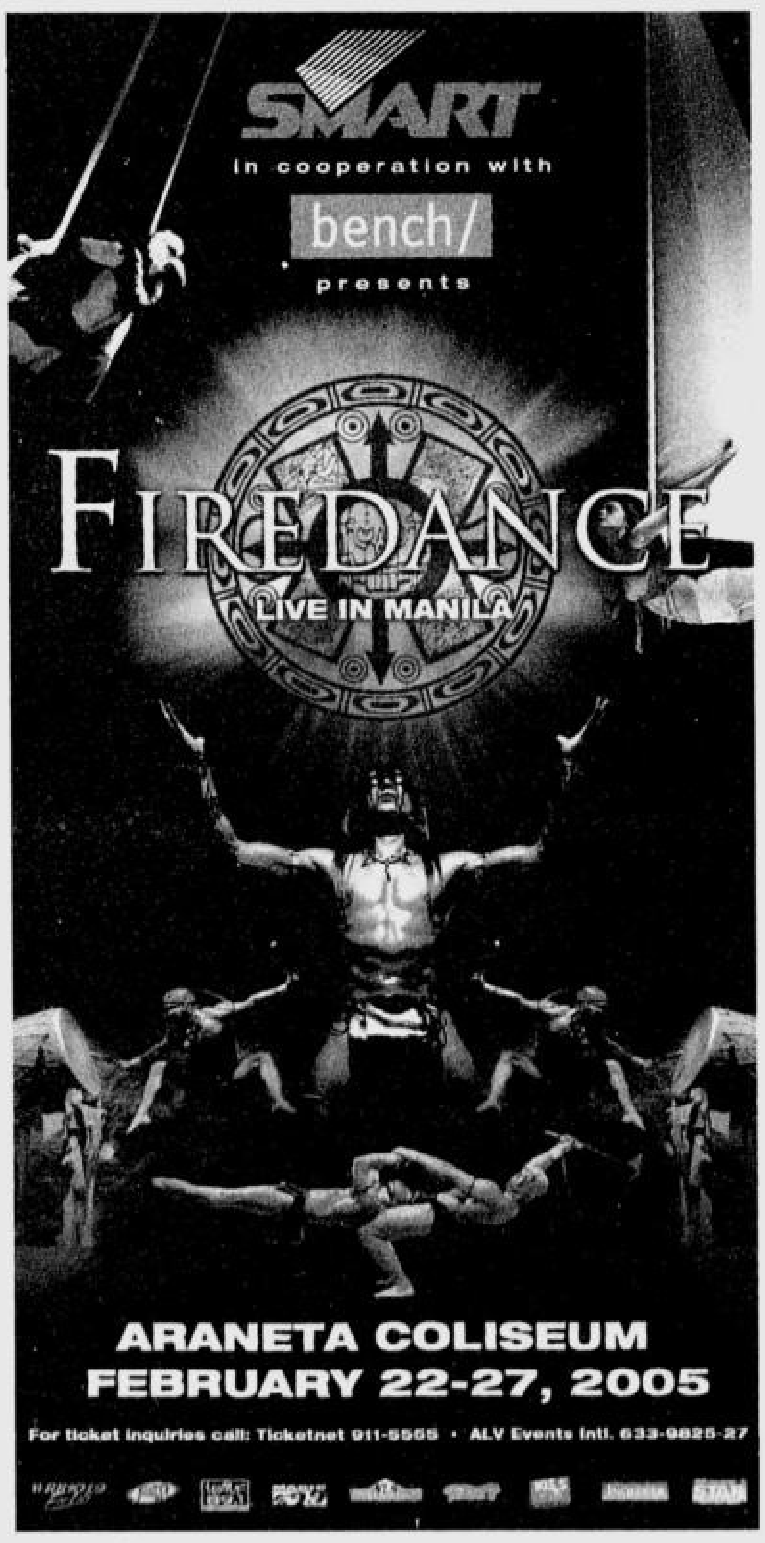
Actor and Optical Media Board Chair **Edu Manzano** was seen dining with a girl who's not from show biz at People's Palace on Nakpil Street in Malate, Manila last Thursday night. The INQUIRER Entertainment witness described the woman as "beautiful, *morena*." Edu was seated near the restaurant's glass door, oblivious to the stares of the crowd on the busy street.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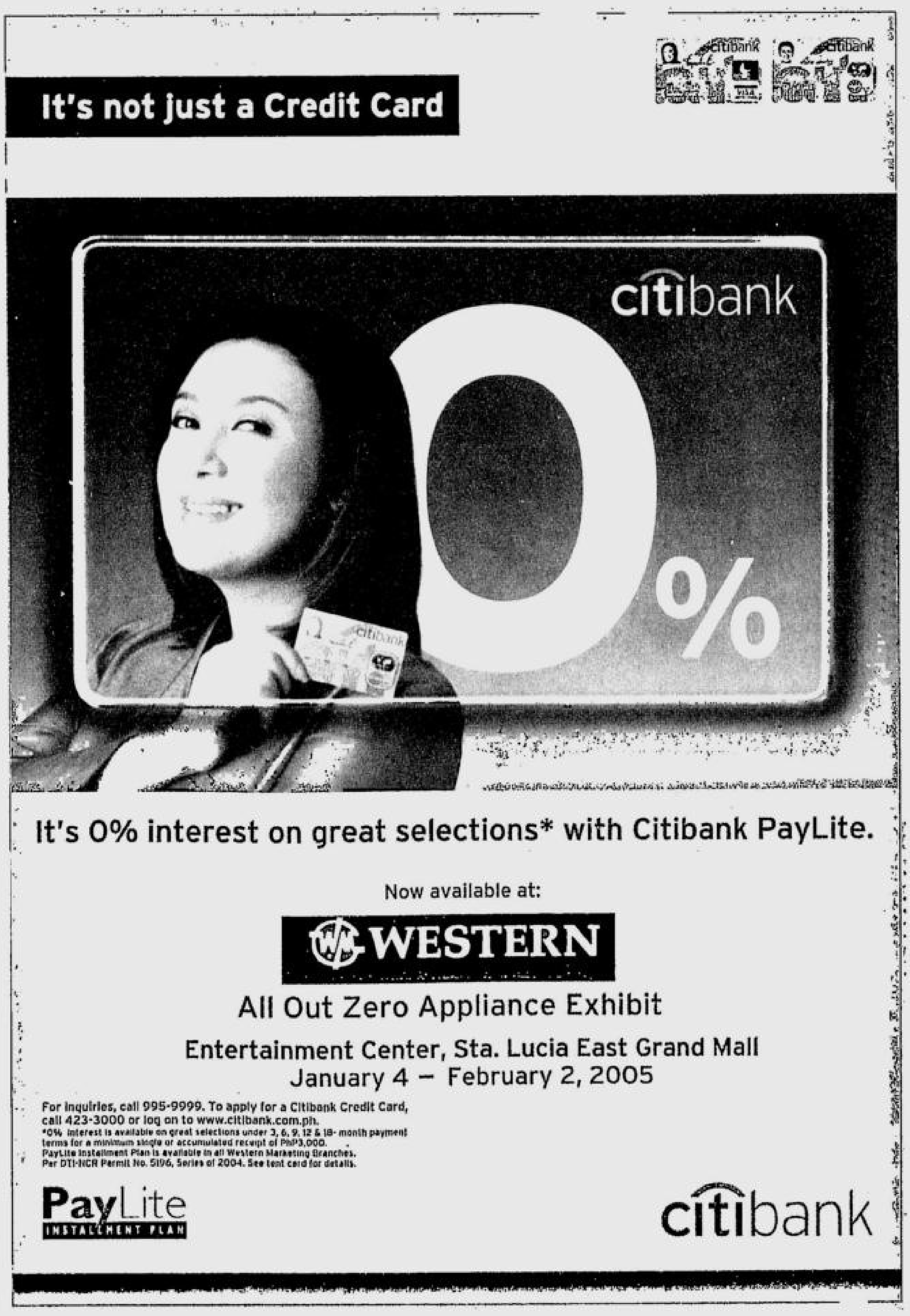
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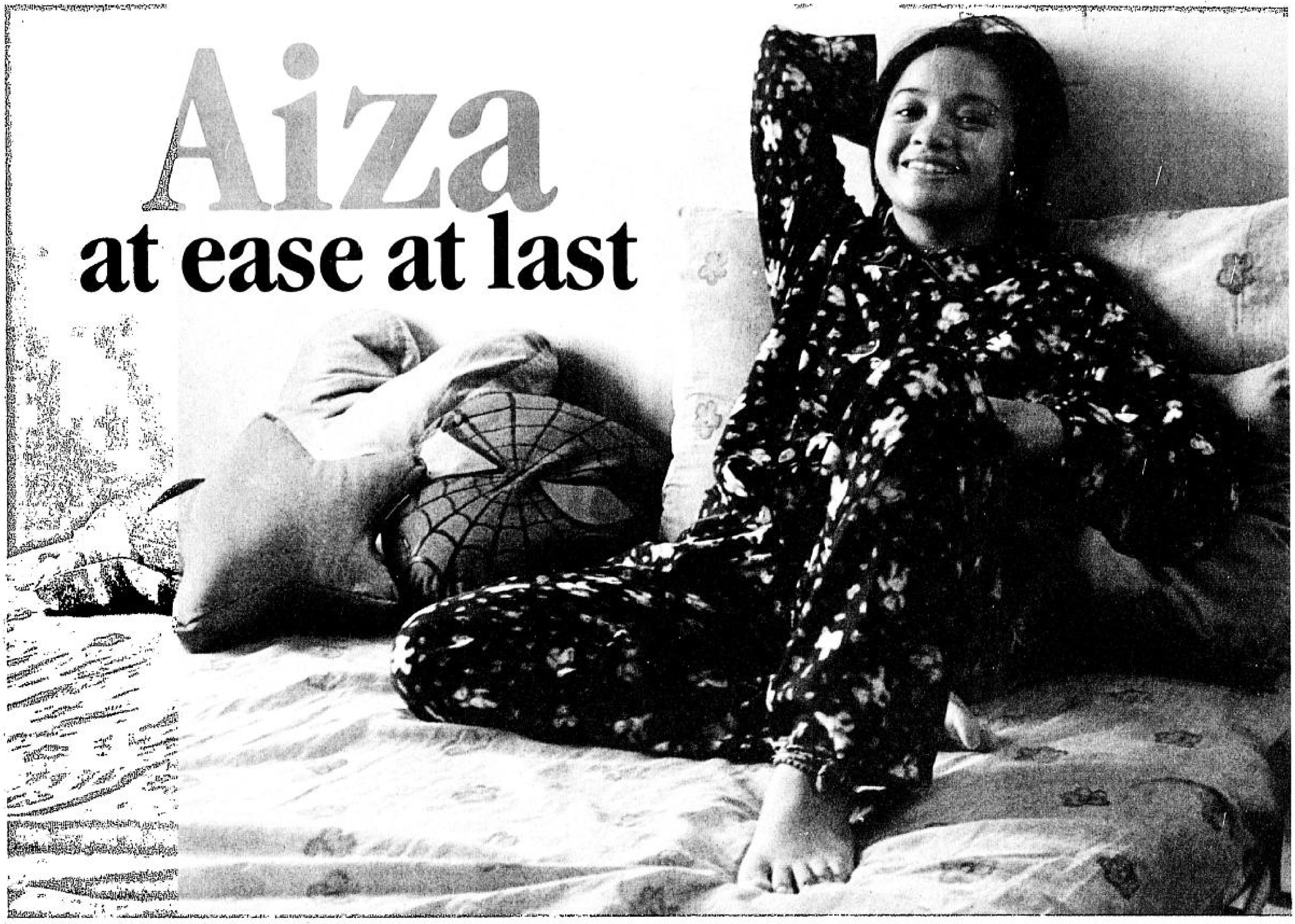
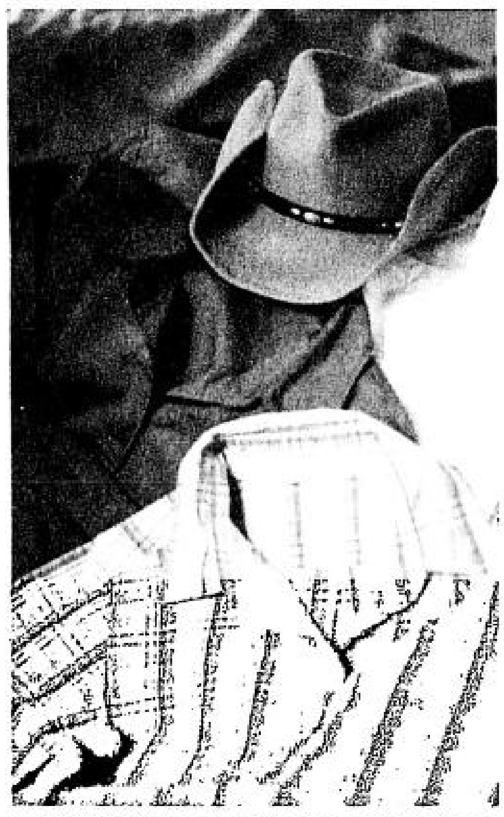
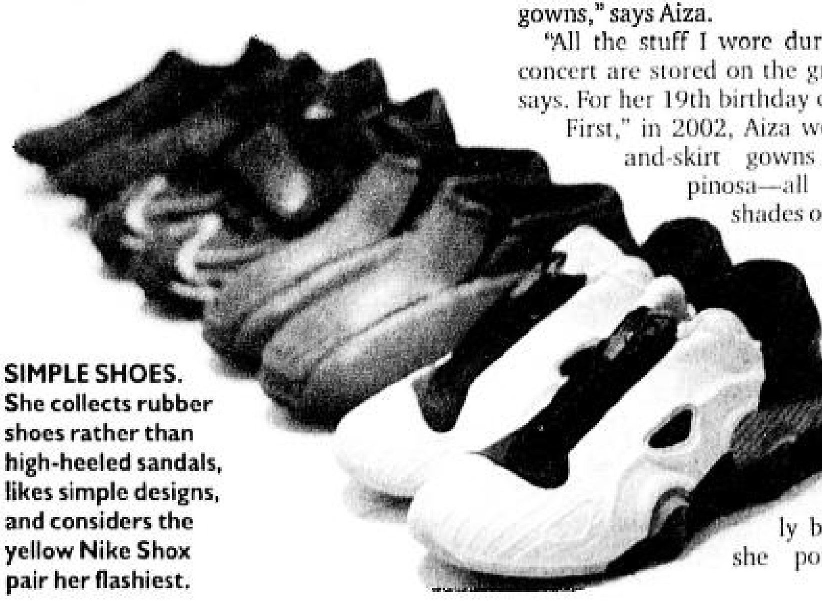
Aiza at ease at last





UNCODED. She doesn't always follow dress codes because she wants to feel comfortable on stage.



SIMPLE SHOES. She collects rubber shoes rather than high-heeled sandals, likes simple designs, and considers the yellow Nike Shox pair her flashiest.

AT PLAY. She spends most of her time in her bedroom, with her Sony Play Station.

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Mitch Mauricio

OUT OF THE CLOSET

AIZA Seguerra, the former child wonder from "Eat Bulaga" who made a big comeback as a singer with the big hit "Pagdating ng Panahon," occupies one of the biggest rooms in the Seguerra home in Cubao, Quezon City, being the only child of Decoroso Seguerra and Caridad Yamson.

Aiza's bedroom has its own bathroom and walk-in closet. During this Out of the Closet visit, Aiza is with a couple of friends who are busy playing with Aiza's Sony Play Station and surfing the Internet on her PC.

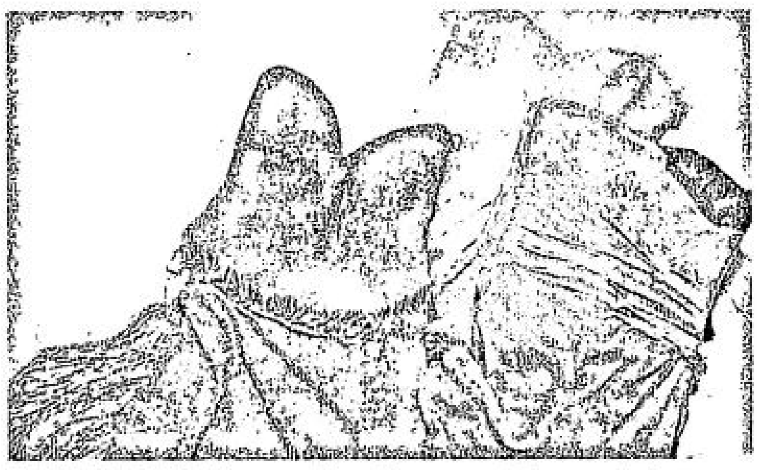
When Aiza introduces INQUIRER Entertainment to her friends, she refers to one, a pretty *mestiza*, as her "darrr-leng." Later on in the interview, Aiza tells us that the high-heeled sandals on her shoe rack are not hers but "someone else's."

"What I like is collecting rubber shoes. I only wear high-heeled sandals if I need to wear gowns," says Aiza.

"All the stuff I wore during my birthday concert are stored on the ground floor," she says. For her 19th birthday concert, called "A First," in 2002, Aiza wore three corset-and-skirt gowns by Larry Espinosa—all in different shades of blue.

Aiza shows us her favorite perfume (Echo, the newest Davidoff scent for men) and a drawer full of boxer shorts.

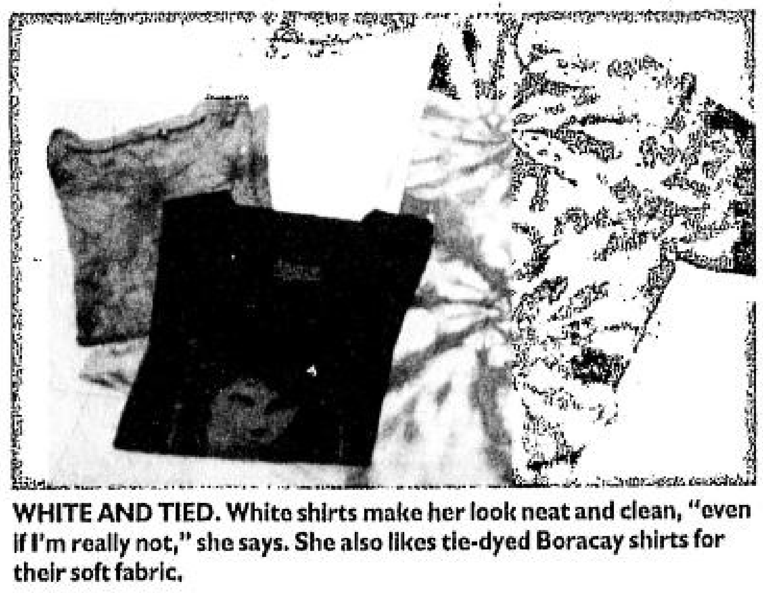
"When I buy things, I only buy for comfort," she points out while showing a pair of adidas canvass rubber shoes. "Don't spend on something when you know it's just a fad."



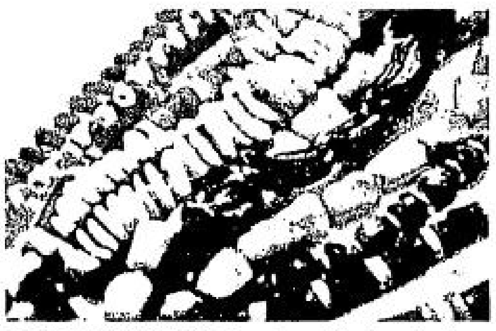
3 FOR THE LADY. She wore these three corseted gowns by Larry Espinosa in her 19th birthday concert.

BOXERS IN BED. She also likes sleeping in boxer shorts of different colors and designs.

MALE SMELL. She does not use women's scents, preferring the fresh smell of Echo.



WHITE AND TIED. White shirts make her look neat and clean, "even if I'm really not," she says. She also likes tie-dyed Boracay shirts for their soft fabric.



BEADS, BANGLES. Beads and body piercing are Aiza's thing because they are a lot less expensive than jewelry.

ACCESSORIES. "I love beads. I was never into jewelry. I accessorize my outfits with beads. They are a lot cheaper than jewelry. There are beads that are expensive, like those that I bought abroad. But if I like them, I buy them.

"I'm also into body piercing. I wanted to have my body pierced years ago, but here in the Philippines, you have to be 21 years old before you can do that. I got my first body piercing only last July, in Canada, where piercing is allowed once you reach 16.

"I was nervous at first. The guy who did this to me explained that there are sensitive nerves around our eyebrows. He did some tests on me first. He asked me if I felt my eyes twitching. I felt nothing so we went on with the piercing.

"He told me to clean the pierced part every day with distilled water. If I don't, it would get infected and swell. *Matrabaho.*"

FOOTWEAR. "I like collecting rubber shoes and slippers. My memorable pairs are those I bought for practical shooting. I have one Nike pair and one Puma pair. They look like those worn by football players. You can wear anything for practical shooting, but since you're required to run a lot it's better to get shoes with spikes. They have more grip.

"Right now, I'm into wearing sneakers. I like the Chuck Taylor and adidas canvass rubber shoes because they are comfortable.

"I like simple designs. So this pair of Nike Shox in bright yellow, red and black is already too flashy for me. I bought this in Japan. Back then, I was one of the few Pinoys who had this pair. I stopped using it when it was already in fashion here.

"I also have a pair of Kobe [Bryant] shoes from adidas. It's kind of heavy to wear. It looks like a flatiron. I don't wear it anymore, but I can't seem to part with it . It's a collector's item, especially now that Kobe is with Nike.

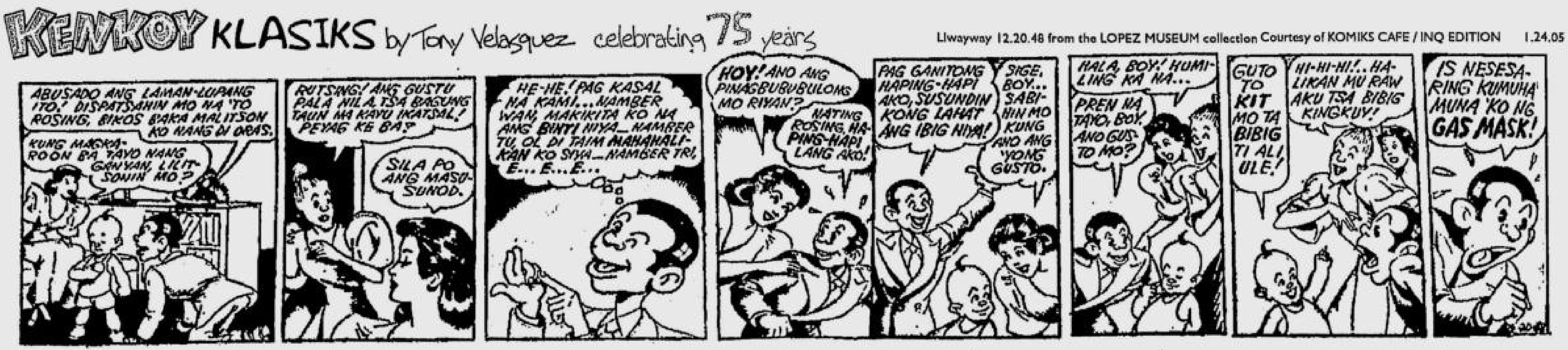
"I bought my favorite pair of slippers from Tribu. They feel good on my feet. Tribu slippers have arcs. I think I'm flatfooted, so I like how they fit my feet. I bring my pair of Sandugo sandals everywhere. It's been with me even to Canada and the States. I don't use this during winter, of course, but I still bring it."

JACKETS. "I have a beaded jacket that I wore in a show in the States. I will never wear it here. It's definitely not my personality. Oh my God, look at it! *Sapilitan lang ito.*

"I also have a synthetic leather jacket that I bought when I was still many pounds heavier. I used it when I went abroad.

"I got my favorite jacket in a store in Japan. This is kind of sentimental, but I don't want the story [about the jacket] to be printed. Let

AIZA/A39


KENKOY KLASIKS by Tony Velasquez celebrating 75 years
ABUSADO ANG LAMAN-LUPANG ITO.' DISPATSAHIN MO NA 'TO ROSING, BIKOS BAKA MALITSON KO NANG DI ORAS.
KUNG MAGKAROON BA TAYO NANG GANYAN, LILITSONIN MO?
RUTSING! ANG GUSTU PALA NILA, TSA BAGUNG TAUN MA KAYU IKATSAL! PEYAG KE BA?
SILA PO ANG MASUSUNOD.
HE-HE.! PAG KASAL NA KAMI... NAMBER WAN, MAKIKITA KO NA ANG BINTI NIYA— NAMBER TU, OL DI TAIM MAHAHALIKAN KO SIYA— NAMBER TRI, E... E... E...
HOY! ANO ANG PINAGBUBUBULONG MO RIYAN?
NATING ROSING, HAPING-HAPI LANG AKO!
PAG GANITONG HAPING-HAPI AKO, SUSUNDIN KONG LAHAT ANG IBIG NIYA!
SIGE, BOY... SABIHIN MO KUNG ANO ANG 'YONG GUSTO.
HALA, BOY! HUMILING KA NA...
PREN NA TAYO, BOY. ANO GUSTO MO?
GUTO TO KIT MO TA BIBIG TI ALI ULE!
HI-HI-HI!.. HALIKAN MU RAW AKU TSA BIBIG KINGKUY!
IS NESESARING KUMUHA MUNA 'KO NG GAS MASK!

Liwayway 12.20.48 from the LOPEZ MUSEUM collection Courtesy of KOMIKS CAFE / INQ EDITION 1.24.05

CNN presents Oscars

CNN brings Hollywood to the world as the 77th Academy Awards are presented on Feb. 28 from the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles.

It is the fourth time that the rites are being held at the same venue, but comedian Chris Rock is taking up the hosting job for the first time.

In addition to CNN's on-air coverage, CNN.com's entertainment team will be posting results and details online.

A special website will provide the full list of nominees and report all activities, from the run-up to the event—including Larry King speaking to some of the main contenders—up till awards night.

As usual, Oscars night is being ushered in by months of gossip and controversy.

Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" and Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" were among the most widely discussed films last year, but it is uncertain whether they will even be nominated.

Possible bets for Best Picture this year include Mike Nichols' "Closer," Martin Scorsese's "The Aviator," Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby," and Marc Forster's "Finding Neverland." Another depiction of real life in the running is "Hotel Rwanda," the story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who hid refugees during the nation's 1994 genocide.

The Academy announces nominations on Tuesday, Jan. 25.

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Nangunguna sa pagalingan, kaya pinararangalan.

2004 Consumers' Choice & Dangal ng Pilipinas Annual Awards
NCQA
SPONSOR

Bukod sa inyo, sari-saring pagkilala ang ipinagkaloob sa RiteMED ng mga respetado at pinagkakatiwalaang consumer groups, drugstore organizations at medical societies. Iba't ibang parangal man ang ibinigay, iisa lang ang kanilang sinasabi: RiteMED ang nangunguna sa pagalingan.

Asahan ninyo na ngayong 2005, mas pagbubutihin pa namin ang serbisyo sa inyo. Maraming, maraming salamat!

RiteMED. Abot-kayang gamot sa mamahaling sakit.

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Vitamins (Vitamin C):
- RiteMED Ascorbic Acid 250mg Tablet
- RiteMED Ascorbic Acid 500mg Tablet

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- RiteMED Bromhexine 4mg/5mL Syrup 60mL
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- RiteMED Simvastatin Tablet

For Diabetes:
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- RiteMED Metformin Tablet

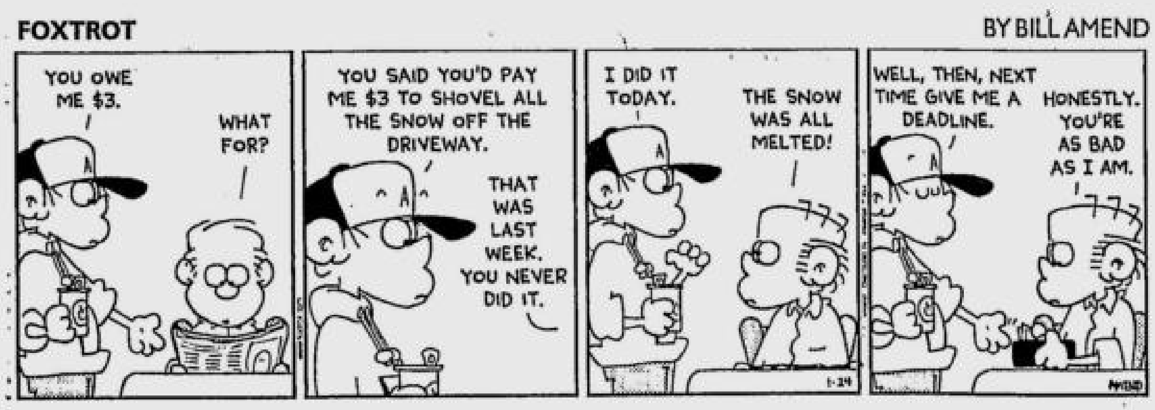
For Asthma:
- RiteMED Salbutamol Syrup and Tablet
- RiteMED Terbutaline Syrup and Tablet

For Infection:
- RiteMED Amoxicillin Suspension and Capsule
- RiteMED Cefalexin Oral Drops, Suspension and Capsule
- RiteMED Cefaclor Oral Drops, Suspension and Capsule
- RiteMED Ceftazidime Vial
- RiteMED Ceftriaxone Vial
- RiteMED Erythromycin Tablet

At may mga bagong gamot pang ilalabas ngayong taon.

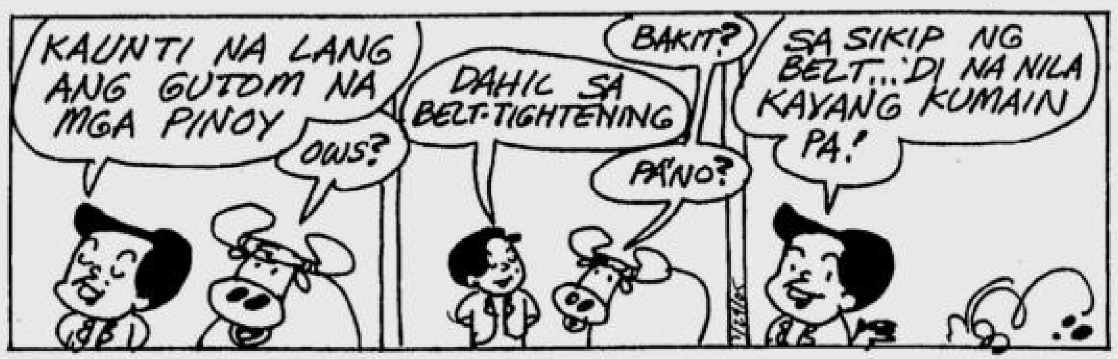
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


YOU OWE ME $3.
WHAT FOR?
YOU SAID YOU'D PAY ME $3 TO SHOVEL ALL THE SNOW OFF THE DRIVEWAY.
THAT WAS LAST WEEK. YOU NEVER DID IT.
I DID IT TODAY.
THE SNOW WAS ALL MELTED!
WELL, THEN, NEXT TIME GIVE ME A DEADLINE.
HONESTLY. YOU'RE AS BAD AS I AM.
1-24
AMEND

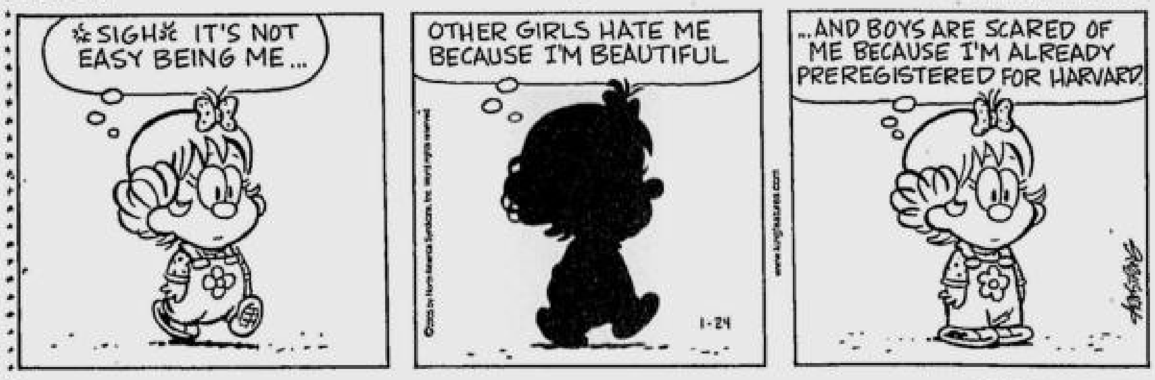
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


KAUNTI NA LANG ANG GUTOM NA MGA PINOY
OWS?
DAHIL SA BELT-TIGHTENING
BAKIT?
PA'NO?
SA SIKIP NG BELT... 'DI NA NILA KAYANG KUMAIN PA!

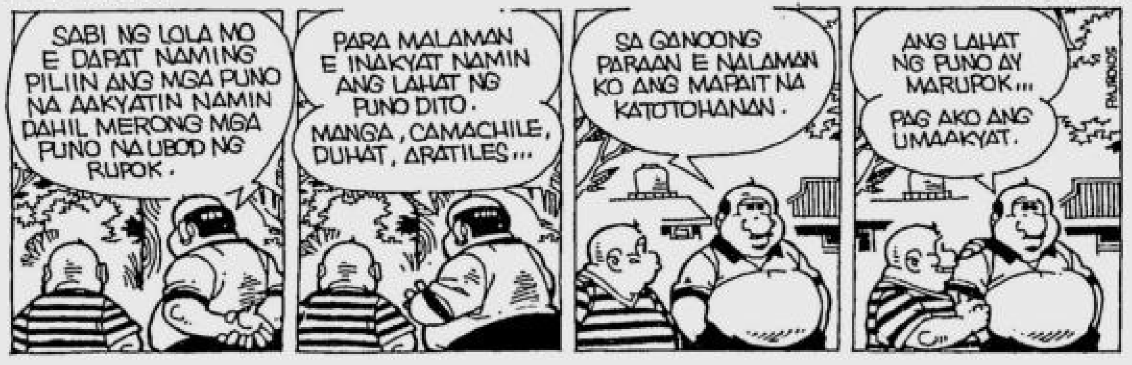
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


SIGH IT'S NOT EASY BEING ME...
OTHER GIRLS HATE ME BECAUSE I'M BEAUTIFUL
...AND BOYS ARE SCARED OF ME BECAUSE I'M ALREADY PREREGISTERED FOR HARVARD
1-24

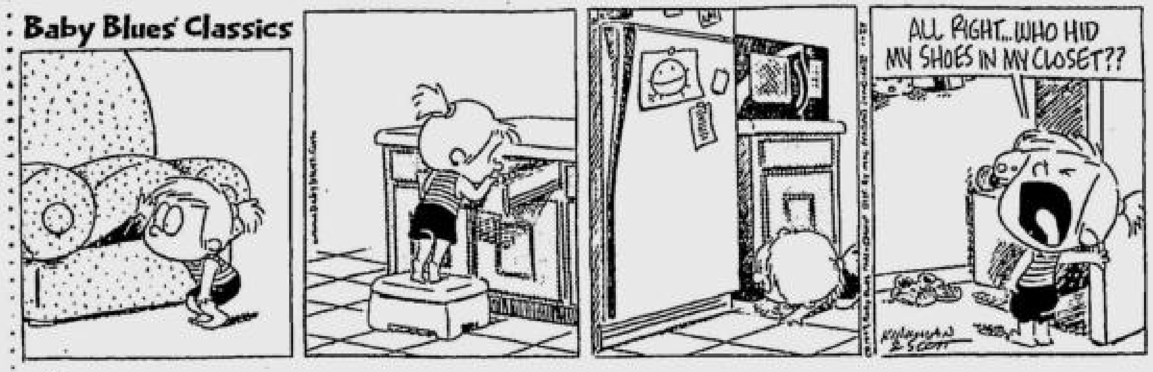
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


SABI NG LOLA MO E DAPAT NAMING PILIIN ANG MGA PUNO NA AAKYATIN NAMIN DAHIL MERONG MGA PUNO NA UBOD NG RUPOK.
PARA MALAMAN E INAKYAT NAMIN ANG LAHAT NG PUNO DITO. MANGA, CAMACHILE, DUHAT, ARATILES...
SA GANOONG PARAAN E NALAMAN KO ANG MAPAIT NA KATOTOHANAN.
ANG LAHAT NG PUNO AY MARUPOK...
PAG AKO ANG UMAAKYAT.

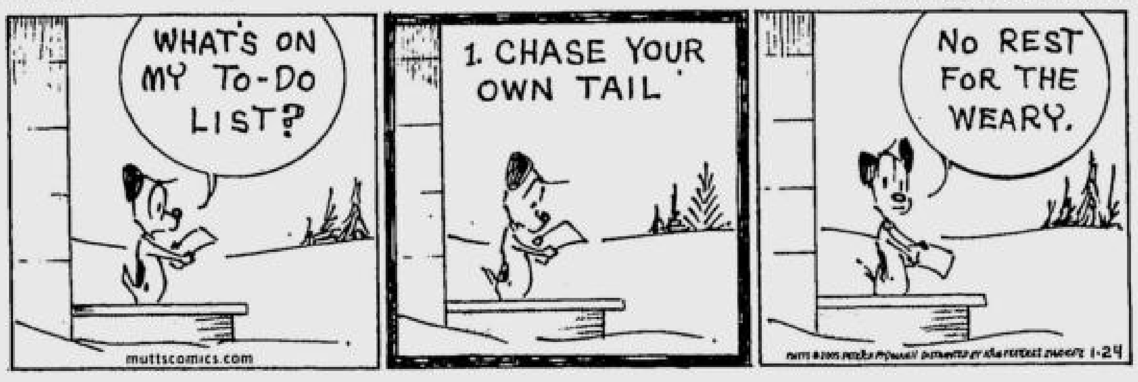
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


Baby Blues' Classics
ALL RIGHT...WHO HID MY SHOES IN MY CLOSET??
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

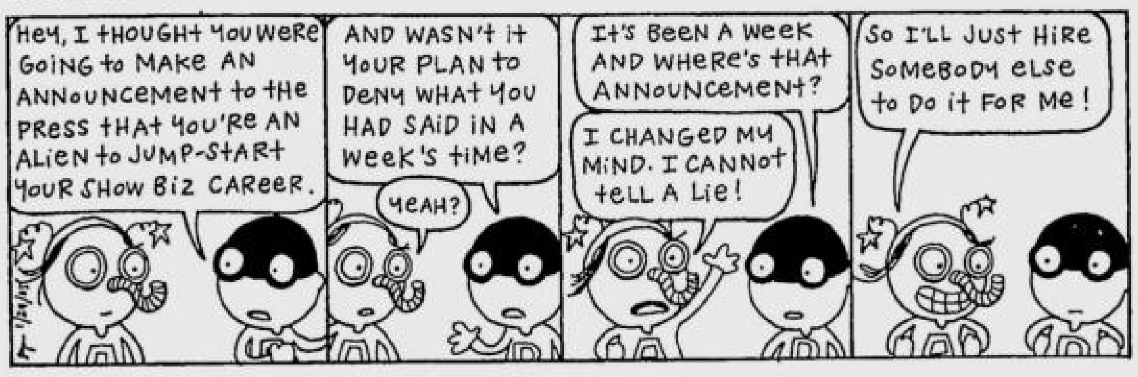
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHAT'S ON MY TO-DO LIST?
1. CHASE YOUR OWN TAIL
NO REST FOR THE WEARY.
muttscomics.com
1-24

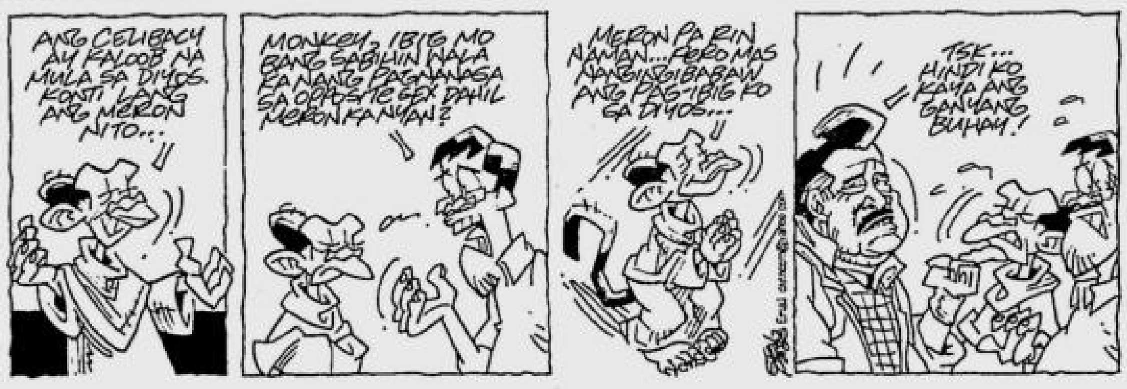
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PRESS THAT YOU'RE AN ALIEN TO JUMP-START YOUR SHOW BIZ CAREER.
AND WASN'T IT YOUR PLAN TO DENY WHAT YOU HAD SAID IN A WEEK'S TIME?
YEAH?
IT'S BEEN A WEEK AND WHERE'S THAT ANNOUNCEMENT?
I CHANGED MY MIND. I CANNOT TELL A LIE!
SO I'LL JUST HIRE SOMEBODY ELSE TO DO IT FOR ME!

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ANG CELIBACY AY KALOOB NA MULA SA DIYOS. KONTI LANG ANG MERON NITO...
MONKEY, IBIG MO BANG SABIHIN WALA KA NANG PAGNANASA SA OPPOSITE SEX DAHIL MERON KA NIYAN?
MERON PA RIN NAMAN... PERO MAS NANGINGIBABAW ANG PAG-IBIG KO SA DIYOS...
TSK... HINDI KO KAYA ANG GANYANG BUHAY!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: People are loyal to you because they admire you. They admire your energy and your activity. At times, it's not easy having all these fans. (Because of this, you have a public mask and a private one.) You understand human nature. Major changes might take place this year, as significant as those in 1996.
Birthdate of: Mischa Barton, actress; John Belushi, actor; Edith Wharton, novelist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Try your best to get along with authority figures and bosses today. Don't be lippy. Don't be flippant. Sometimes you're tempted to be like this when you're impatient.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You're excited about learning something new. If any of you have the chance to travel anywhere now, do so! You want to expand your horizons in any way that you can.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You feel intensely and passionately about everything lately. That's OK. This is a passing influence, and it will be gone in a couple of weeks.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Three planets now oppose your sign. This can cause you to feel that others are not on your side. But that is an illusion. You can work things out.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You should definitely capitalize on this lovely urge to get better organized in your life. Give yourself the right tools to do a decent job.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Love affairs, romance, vacations and pleasant social times are tops on your list right now. Sometimes we work; sometimes we play. For you, it's playtime!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your efforts to make your home more beautiful will please you. You want a place you can feel proud of, where you can invite others to relax and enjoy themselves.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Be extra-clear in all your communication with others now. You have a strong desire to enlighten people about something. (That's OK.)

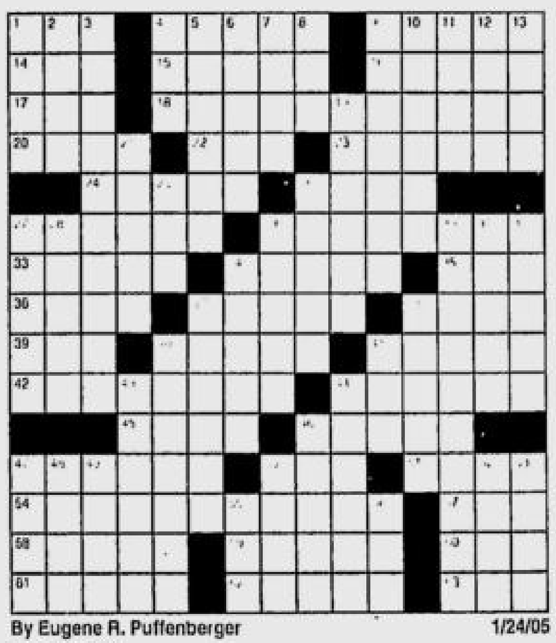
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're more involved with money than usual. Your cash flow is on your mind. That's because you're spending more as well as making an effort to earn more. (But you're getting beautiful things!)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): With three planets in your sign now, you can literally magnetize others to you. People and unexpected opportunities come your way. Be ready to act!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Joint efforts with others can benefit you now. Join clubs. Make new friends. Get involved with others. More than any other sign, yours values friendships with others.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your ambition is aroused now. Don't be afraid to go after what you want. Because the resources of others are available to you now, you can succeed beyond your wildest expectations. Expect a miracle!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Eugene R. Puffenberger
Houston, TX
1/24/05

ACROSS
1 Silver-gray color
4 Porcelain maker
9 Slight in build
14 Life story, briefly
15 "The Tempest" role
16 Major artery
17 Be off
18 Venomous lizard
20 Singer Horne
22 Branch of Buddhism
23 Says
24 Muncher
26 Headliner
27 Core groups
29 Wanton slaughter
33 John of rock
34 Amble along
35 Chop
36 Literary notable
37 Facetious tribute
38 Intertwine
39 Actress Gabor
40 John Cleland novel, "__ Hill"
41 Large leg bone
42 Result of too much lying?
44 Projecting handles
45 Deuce topper
46 Eye shade
47 Warnings
50 Purpose
51 Promising clue
54 Endangered African amphibian
57 Valuable vein
58 High up
59 Fight venue
60 A Bobbsey twin
61 Deserves
62 Sahl and Drucker
63 Cunning

DOWN
1 Son of Adam
2 Foal's father
3 Spiny lizard
4 Low spot
5 Rewards
6 Well worker
7 School official
8 Horror-film street
9 Dream
10 Speakers' platforms
11 Comic Johnson
12 Roman road
13 "I Remember Mama" character
19 Get-go
21 Brother of Moses
25 X
26 Full of back talk
27 Show biz personality
28 Kicking partner?
29 Painful cries
30 Colorful lizards
31 Happen again
32 Wide-mouthed pitchers
34 Cash
37 Least cooked
38 Flat
40 Production plans
41 Moroccan city
43 Discord
44 "Sanford and Son" son
46 Employer
47 Thickening agent
48 The Kinks 1970 hit
49 Many
50 '60s do
52 Inland Asian sea
53 Gainsay
55 Emoter
56 Auto fuel

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

A	S	O	R	■	M	A	I	L	■	E	L	S	A	S
N	E	B	O	■	U	L	N	A	■	G	O	T	M	E
T	A	O	S	■	D	A	T	I	N	G	G	A	M	E
I	L	I	E	■	S	N	O	R	T	S	■	D	O	R
W	A	S	H	S	T	A	N	D	S	■	F	I	N	E
A	N	T	I	P	O	L	E	S	■	L	O	U	I	S
R	E	S	P	O	N	D	S	■	K	A	R	M	A	S
■	■	■	■	T	E	A	■	B	I	D	■	■	■	■
S	C	O	U	T	S	■	S	E	L	L	S	O	F	F
E	A	R	L	Y	■	M	I	L	L	E	N	N	I	A
V	E	G	A	■	G	I	N	G	E	R	A	L	E	S
E	S	A	■	M	I	D	A	I	R	■	C	E	S	T
R	U	N	N	I	N	G	T	A	B	■	K	A	T	E
A	R	I	E	L	■	E	R	N	E	■	E	V	A	S
L	A	C	E	D	■	S	A	S	E	■	R	E	S	T

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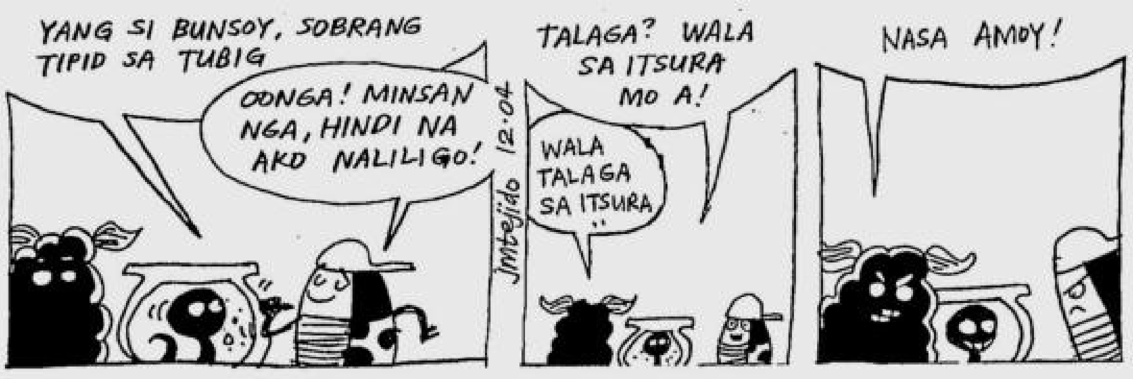
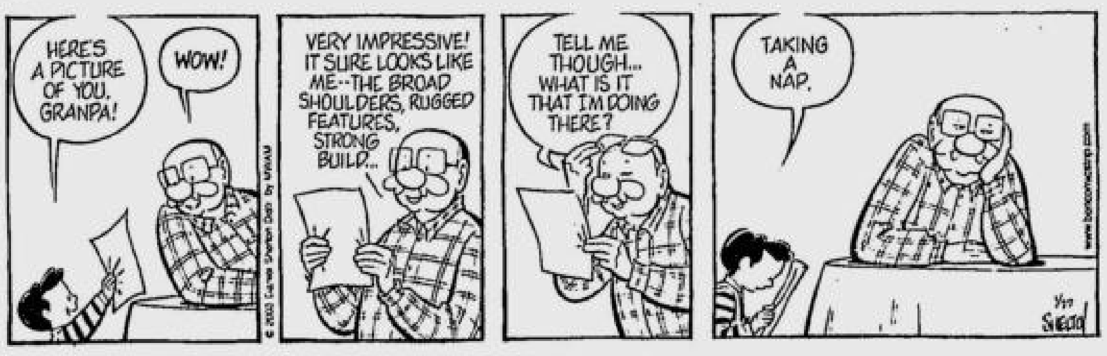
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


YANG SI BUNSOY, SOBRANG TIPID SA TUBIG
OONGA! MINSAN NGA, HINDI NA AKO NALILIGO!
JMTEJIDO 12·04
TALAGA? WALA SA ITSURA MO A!
WALA TALAGA SA ITSURA
NASA AMOY!

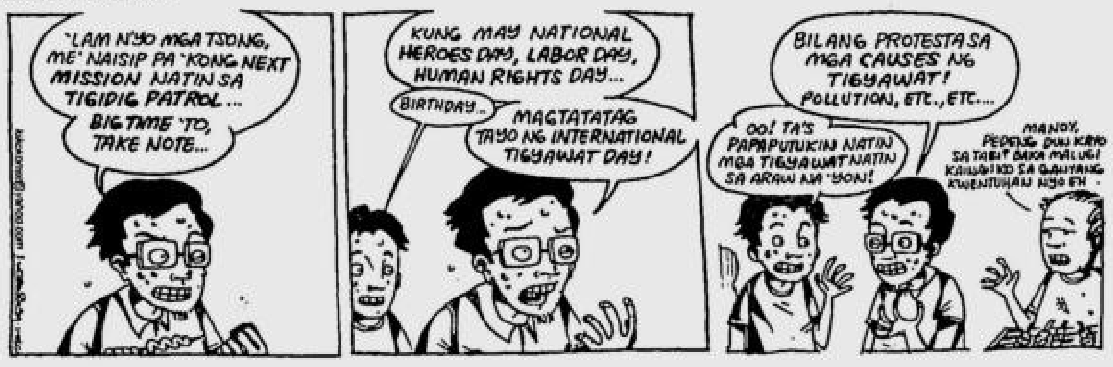
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HERE'S A PICTURE OF YOU, GRANPA!
WOW!
VERY IMPRESSIVE! IT SURE LOOKS LIKE ME--THE BROAD SHOULDERS, RUGGED FEATURES, STRONG BUILD...
TELL ME THOUGH... WHAT IS IT THAT I'M DOING THERE?
TAKING A NAP.
SHELTON

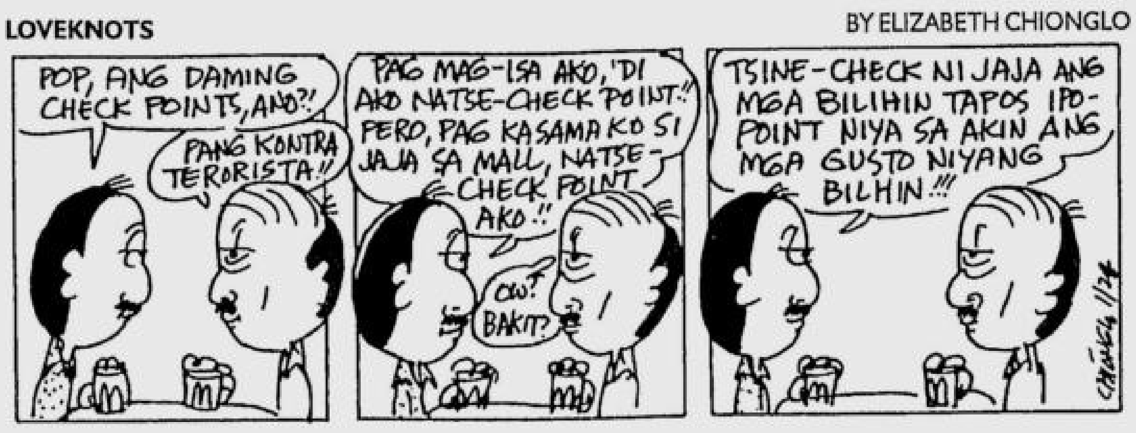
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


'LAM N'YO MGA TSONG, ME' NAISIP PA 'KONG NEXT MISSION NATIN SA TIGIDIG PATROL...
BIG TIME 'TO, TAKE NOTE...
KUNG MAY NATIONAL HEROES DAY, LABOR DAY, HUMAN RIGHTS DAY...
BIRTHDAY...
MAGTATATAG TAYO NG INTERNATIONAL TIGYAWAT DAY!
BILANG PROTESTA SA MGA CAUSES NG TIGYAWAT! POLLUTION, ETC., ETC...
OO! TA'S PAPAPUTUKIN NATIN MGA TIGYAWAT NATIN SA ARAW NA 'YON!
MANOY, PEDENG DUN KAYO SA TABI? BAKA MALUGI KAINAN KO SA GANITONG KWENTUHAN NYO EH.

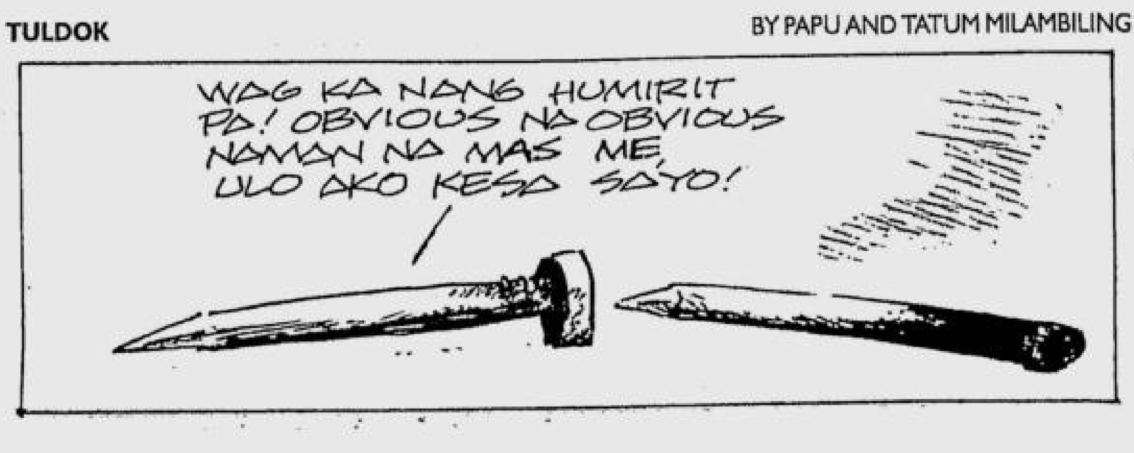
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


POP, ANG DAMING CHECK POINTS, ANO?!
PANG KONTRA TERORISTA!!
PAG MAG-ISA AKO, 'DI AKO NATSE-CHECK POINT!! PERO, PAG KASAMA KO SI JAJA SA MALL, NATSE-CHECK POINT AKO!!
OW? BAKIT?
TSINE-CHECK NI JAJA ANG MGA BILIHIN TAPOS IPO-POINT NIYA SA AKIN ANG MGA GUSTO NIYANG BILHIN!!!
CHIONGLO 1/24

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WAG KA NANG HUMIRIT PA! OBVIOUS NA OBVIOUS NAMAN NA MAS ME ULO AKO KESA SAYO!

More exciting combination

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WHEN **Brad Pitt** decided to settle down with **Jennifer Aniston** some years back, some Hollywood dealmakers were frankly disappointed, because they found Jennifer too bland for moviedom's sexy Golden Boy. They wanted to link him to the more "exciting" likes of **Angelina Jolie.**

Well, Brad and Jennifer recently announced their separation—and, since it happened while Brad was making a new film with Angelina, some film fans can't be faulted for adding two and two, and coming up with 102!

No confirmation yet of an incipient Brad-Angelina romance, but those deal-makers in Hollywood are feeling upbeat—not because they necessarily dislike Jennifer, but because they feel that Brad's screen image could use some punching up. And sultry co-stars like Angelina could be just the hot ticket to do that.

Spanish channel on Cable

ONE of the channels we like watching on cable is the Spanish channel. It gives us a feel of Europe to balance all the American stuff on the other channels, in a language we can more or less figure out, and some of its cultural features have been particularly interesting.

For one week, however, we missed the Spanish channel on our SkyCable lineup. We figured out that some other subscribers could be missing it, too, so we tried to figure out what we can do to bring the Spanish channel back on the tube.

We feel that it's more useful to viewers here than all those German, Japanese, Korean and French channels all over the cable programming spectrum. Since more Filipinos understand Spanish more than those other languages, it's logical that we should have a Spanish channel on cable TV.

Well, before we could run an item asking for the return of the Spanish channel to the TV screen, one fine day, we turned into Channel 76, and wonders of wonders, we saw that the Spanish channel has resumed telecasting!

Wonderful! And, *muchas gracias.*

Feedback

FROM **Salve Zaragoza** of Silay City: "As a concerned citizen, I support the campaign against pornography. Reading your column titled 'Uphill Battle Against Pornography,' I was very thankful to learn that there are groups like the Philippine Alliance Against Pornography that are concerned about safeguarding our people against immoral forms of entertainment that have destructive effects on us, not only on our way of life but also on our dignity as persons.

"I agree with you that people tend to forget that they are adults and therefore psychologically formed and able to take care of themselves, while the youth is vulnerable and therefore needs to be protected.

"I believe in the adage, 'Whatever stains a child also stains an old man. Therefore, adults musn't allow pornographic materials to subtly de-

MORE EXCITING/ A38

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 (DTS) SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
3 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 SEED OF CHUCKY
3 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE
2 UNO
3 (DTS) ONE MISSED CALL
4 GALING GALING MO BABES
5 BLADE TRINITY

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 MANO PO
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 (DTS) BLADE TRINITY
4 (DOLBY) SEED OF CHUCKY

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 BUKAS MAY UMAGA
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 SECRETARY
4 HAROLD & KUMAR

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 LASTIKMAN
2 WHITE NOISE
3 (DOLBY) DARKNESS
4 (DTS) 2046

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) WHITE NOISE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 (DTS ES) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 AFTER THE SUNSET

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 HAPPY SIGAW
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE
4 (DTS) AFTER THE SUNSET

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
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2 OCEAN'S 12	2 MADHOUSE	2 OCEAN'S 12	6 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MEET THE FOCKERS 12 50, 3 20, 5 50, 8 20, 10 50	2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS	3 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 MEET THE FOCKERS [illegible]	7 BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 OCEAN'S 12 1 30, 4 00, 6 30, 9 00, 11 30	3 NED KELLY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 RAISE YOUR VOICE		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 2 55, 5 00, 7 05, 9 10, 11 15	4 OCEAN'S 12
5 WHITE NOISE				GUARANTEED SEATS 5 WHITE NOISE 2 35, 4 45, 6 55, 9 05, 11 15	5

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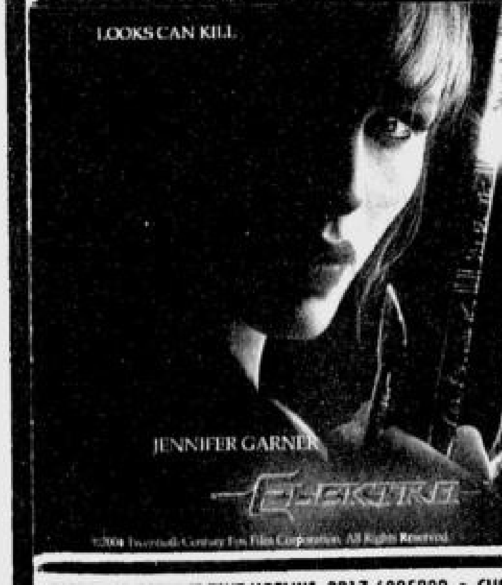

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JENNIFER GARNER
ELEKTRA

OPENS JANUARY 26
IN
AYALA CINEMAS
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MTRCB Rating: PG13
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'Denmark Idol' is Pinoy

From page A40

"Otherwise," she said, "he would be a nervous wreck. I certainly didn't want him to feel left out, just because the other contestants' parents were present."

To thank the couple for their support, Christian bought them plane tickets for the trip here. Splurging? He deserved it. Not everyone gets to beat 1,500 competitors in the world's most popular syndicated talent search.

In fact, Christian said, the title of his album, "Can't Break Me," refers to the challenges he has faced since joining the contest.

Video for "It's All About You," the first single off the collection, was shot in Barcelona, Spain.

"In the video, it's summer, but actually it was very cold when we shot it, in November," he said. "The girl in the video was supposed to swim across the pool but she stopped halfway and cried because she said it was freezing."

The album contains 10 love songs. His favorite, he said, is "She Makes Me Sing," because he co-wrote it. "I had a huge crush on this girl in Denmark at the time," he said sheepishly.

He noted that, in the acknowledgement notes, he "deliberately" wrote "Maraming Salamat Po" so that people would know exactly where he is from. "I'm a true-blue Pinoy," he said, "but I'm often mistaken for a Thai or Vietnamese."

He said that after winning the title, he had to make a lot of personal changes. For instance, he used to dress up hip hop style, even if all his friends told him it made him look shorter. So he shifted to what he now calls "hip pop."

"I used to be afraid of wearing the colors green and pink. Then I said, what the heck, it was time to try different things."

At this point, he said, he would really love to do a concert with his own Filipino idols, Ogie Alcasid and Regine Velasquez.

Meanwhile, he returns to Copenhagen next week to begin the Denmark leg of his album promotion tour.

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
JENNIFER GARNER
BORN TO FIGHT. TRAINED TO KILL.
ELEKTRA
MARVEL
FROM THE FORCES THAT BROUGHT YOU "X-MEN"
OPENS JANUARY 26

More exciting...

From page A37

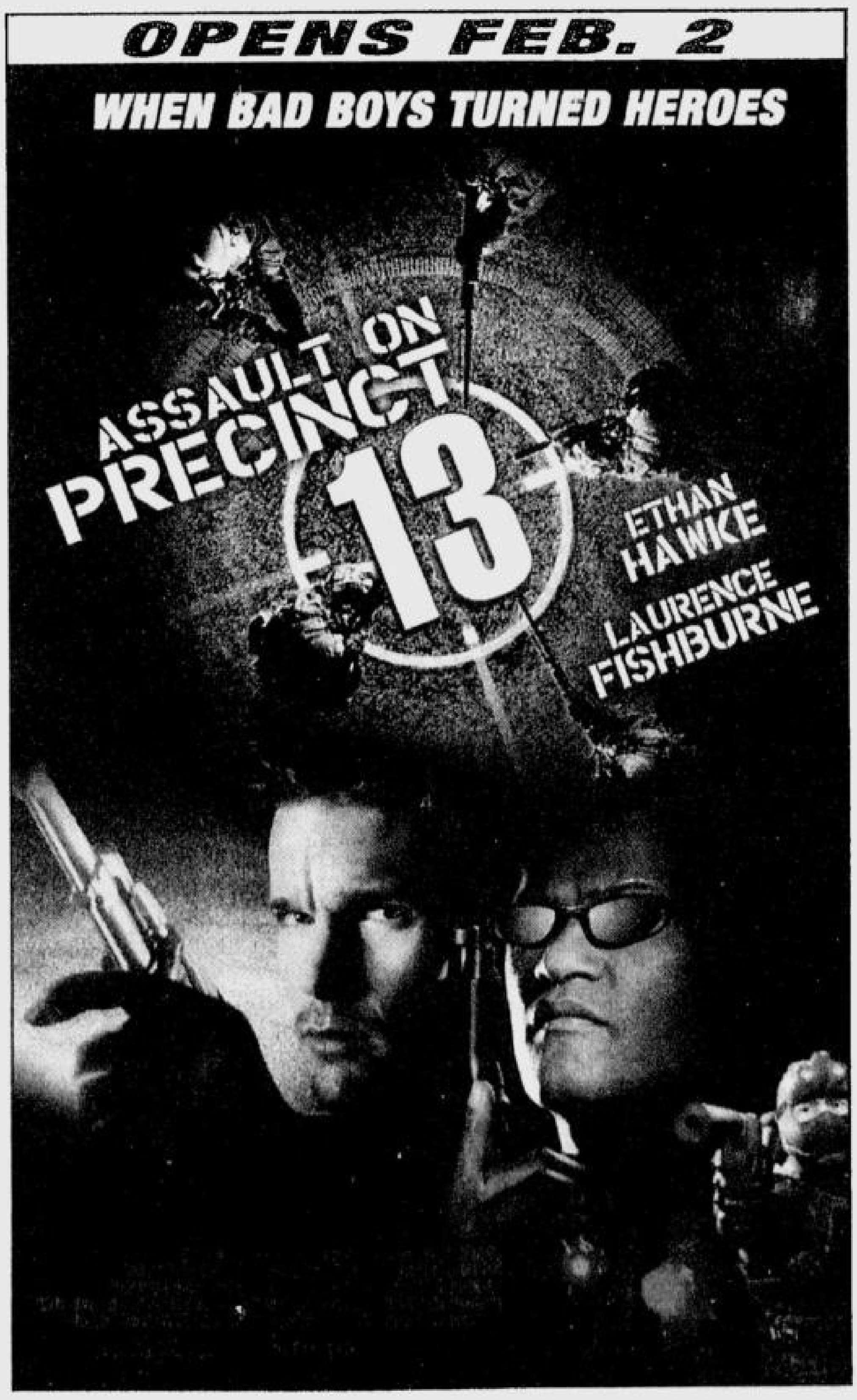
stroy the purity of our hearts, especially the young.

"I would also like to appeal to the PAAP to also help promote modest and clean billboards. I hope that blatantly immodest billboards will soon be removed. We can't allow ads that have an adverse effects on all who see them..."

New series

A NEW 30-minute animated comedy series, "Hi Hi Puffy, AmiYumi," will debut on Cartoon Network on Friday, Feb. 4, at 6:30 p.m. It follows the adventures of two cool but very different pop stars as they travel from gig to gig, or just hang out in Tokyo. Being famous rock stars, Ami and Yumi travel all over the globe in their customized tour bus.

Based on the real-life Japanese girlband, the comedy series is about Japanese rock stars **Ami Onuki** and **Yumi Yoshimura**. Their first single, "Asian No Junshin," sold more than a million copies in Japan, and immediately turned them into superstars in Japan.


OPENS FEB. 2
WHEN BAD BOYS TURNED HEROES
ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
ETHAN HAWKE
LAURENCE FISHBURNE

AIZA'S only wish at the moment is to play the guitar better, a consuming interest since she was 9.

BEADED jacket "just for show," she says—definitely not her type.

FLATFOOTED, she is most comfortable wearing these slippers and sandals.

HER BELOVED Cerro Torre bag (below) took a beating, and some bat droppings, during a trip to Sagada. These two pairs of canvass rubber shoes—adidas and Converse—are her current faves.

Aiza at ease at last

From page A34

it stay a secret."

GOWNS. "I still have the gowns I wore to the prom. Eddie Badeo designed them all. They're all rotting in my closet. I was still big then.

BAG. "I'm a backpacker. I've been everywhere with this bag, a Cerro Torre. I like the fit. It's well-crafted. They say this is one of the brands that experienced hikers use. My bag was at its dirtiest when I went with friends to Sagada. It had bat droppings (guano) all over it. It was so smelly."

HATS. "I bought this cowboy hat in Texas, when I went there for a show. But this wasn't a costume. I just bought it because I liked it.

"I collect baseball caps not only because they accentuate my outfit, but also because they are great during bad-hair days. I've had this beige Fila cap for three years now. I use it when I find myself in situations where I have to face people even though I've not taken a bath yet, like right now (laughs)."

SCENT. "I've been using Davidoff's Echo since October. Before that, I was into Issey Miyake. I don't like strong scents. That's one reason I don't use perfume for women. But if I'm to choose, I like Cool Water for Women and Light Blue from Dolce & Gabanna."

JEANS. "I like wearing jeans more than anything. I prefer those that are loose fitting, like the pair I'm wearing now. But I don't like baggy types because they only make me look small.

"I'd like to show you my favorite pair, but it's in the laundry now. I wear my pants for two weeks straight. It feels good. Dirt softens the fabric (laughs)."

TOPS. "I prefer white. White makes me look neat and clean, even if I'm really not (laughs). I'm really a simple dresser. I hardly wear bright colors, but I have a couple of tie-dyed shirts from Boracay. I like them because they are made of really soft fabric.

"There's hardly any difference between the clothes I wear at home and those I wear in shows. There are some producers who require a certain dress code, but I don't always follow them. I want to feel comfortable with the clothes I'm wearing on stage."

SLEEPWEAR. "I always wear my favorite flannel pajamas to sleep. They feel very soft and comfy. I sleep well whenever I wear them. I also have boxer shorts, which I bought mostly from Joe Boxer. I like them because of their colorful designs."

Aiza says she does not aspire for anything more in her show biz career.

"My only wish is to be better at playing the guitar," she says. "I want to train some more. I started playing the piano and guitar when I was 9. I started to have formal lessons only when I enrolled in college."

Aiza, however, had to take a leave of absence from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila "because of work."

"I started in show business when I was very small," she recalls. "It had been fast. Now, I just want to be happy with what I'm doing. After all these years, I'm starting to feel comfortable with the pace of my career only now."

Aiza was last seen with comedian Vic Sotto in the fantasy movie "Enteng Kabisote: Okay Ka Fairy Ko . . . The Legend," the top grosser in last December's Metro Manila Film Festival.

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1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 UNO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city baguio
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 FORGOTTEN
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city batangas
1 HONEY
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 HELLWOLF

sm city marilao
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city bacoor
1 RAISE YOUR VOICE
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 MAD HOUSE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE
7 UNO
8 NATIONAL TREASURE

sm city dasmariñas
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 UNO

sm city lucena
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
3 AFTER THE SUNSET
4 SKY CAPTAIN

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 WHITE NOISE
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 NED KELLY
7 DARKNESS
8 BLADE TRINITY

sm city iloilo
1 HAROLD AND KUMAR
2 RESERVED
3 HELLWOLF
4 OUT OF REACH
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
6 BLADE TRINITY
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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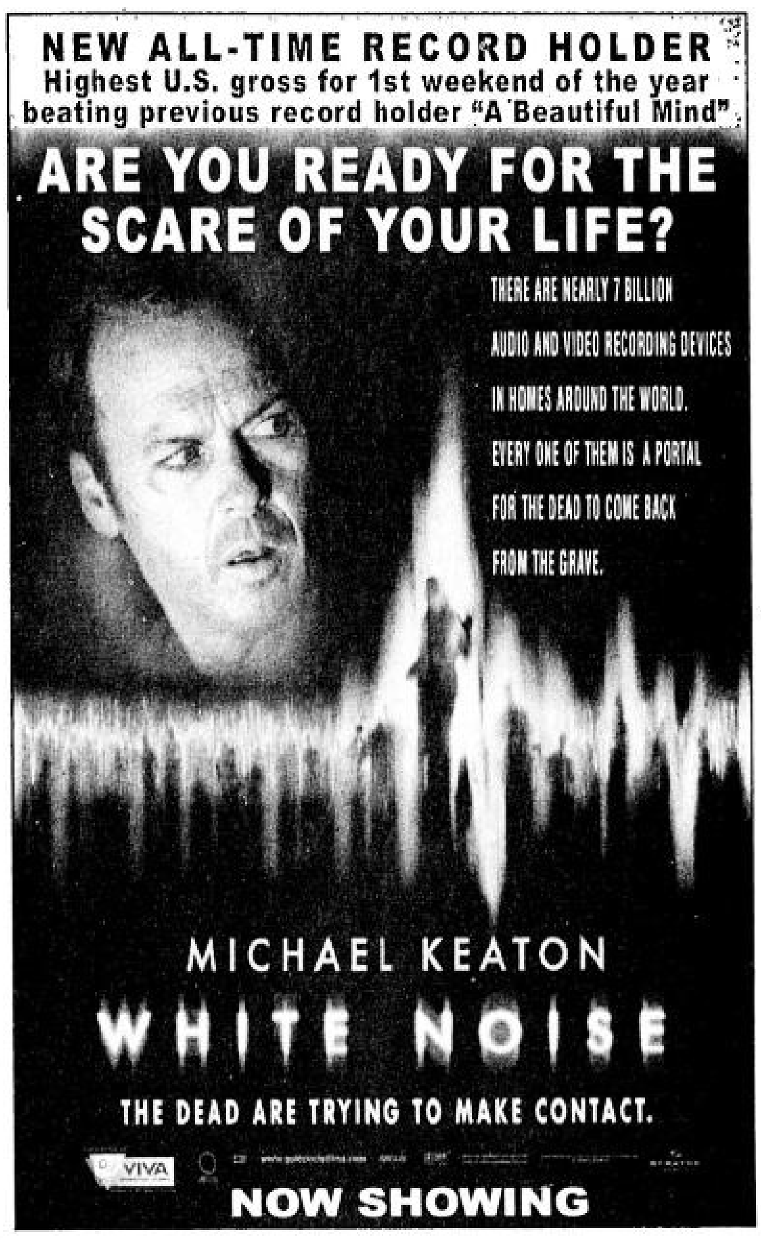
1 KUNG FU HUSLTE
2 NANGNAK
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 DARKNESS
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 DARKNESS
3 WIMBLEDON
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA



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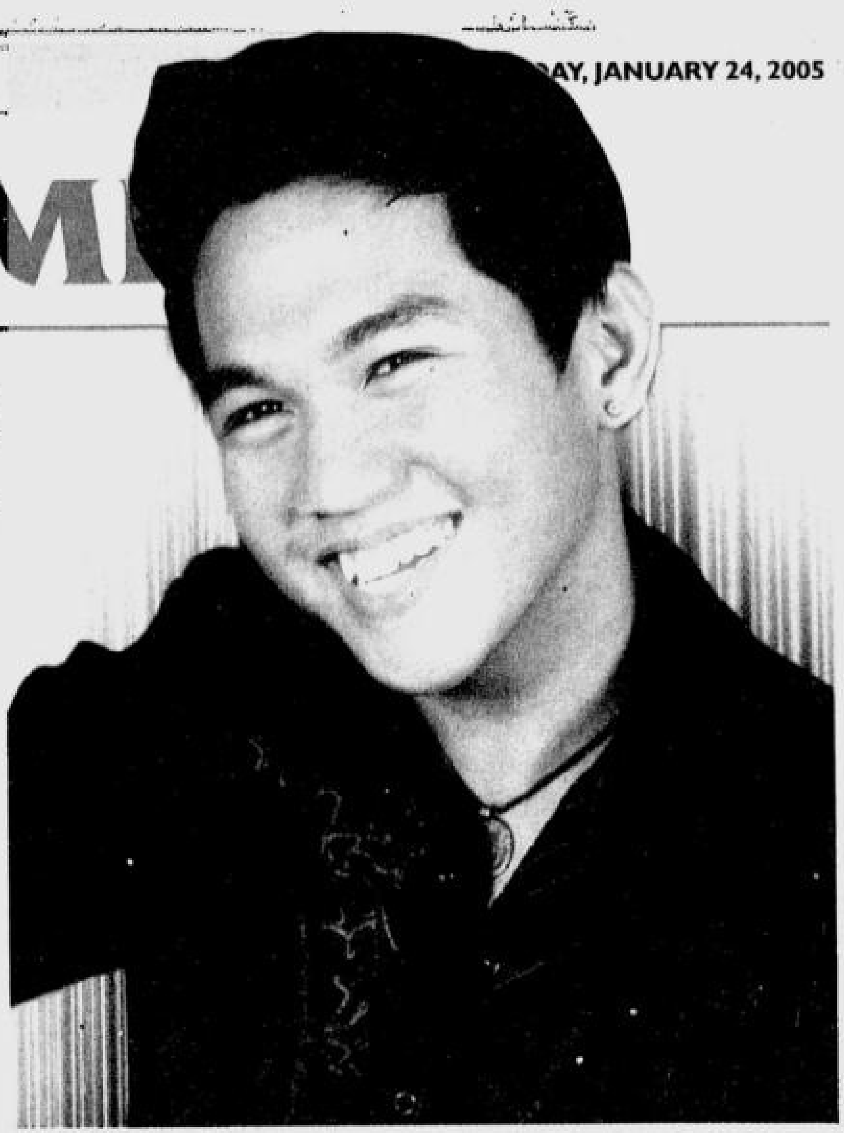


CAN'T BREAK ME. The title of one of Christian's songs also refers to him.

'Denmark Idol' is a Pinoy

By Ruth L. Navarra

TALENT and its appreciation transcend nationality, color and age.

Christian Mendoza, 17, proved this yet again when, in December 2003, he became the very first "Denmark Idol," even when it seemed all the odds were against him.

Christian migrated from the Philippines when he was 14. He had been in Copenhagen for only two years when he joined the Danish version of the wildly popular talent search, "American Idol." He could not speak his adoptive language well enough at the time; whenever he tried, he invariably took on a weird accent.

"There were times during the competition when they interviewed me live on TV and I could not answer the questions simply because I didn't know how," the young singer recently recounted, speaking still in Filipino. But the language barrier did not stop him from going after the dream. "I told myself, language should not matter all that much as long as I could sing."

As it turned out, his broken Danish endeared him more to televiewers nationwide. Proof was, he garnered 57 percent of the votes during the contest's final round.

Polite, humble

Because he was only 16 when the competition started, the judges had misgivings about Christian's ability to handle the pressures of becoming a pop star. Ah, if they could only see him now, disarming even professional TV interviewers.

This we witnessed during the recent Philippine launch of his first album, "Can't Break Me," produced by BMG Denmark and "adopted" by BMG Philippines. No one could resist his humility and politeness.

Christian's replies to questions hurled at him were peppered with *po* and *opo*. Whenever he made a mistake, he pinched the bridge of his nose, shook his head, smiled and apologized. "Sorry *po, kuya, ate.*"

The interviewers could only say, "It's okay ... let's do it again."

In the end of the media conference, the "Idol" said, "*Salamat po sa pagpapasensiya ninyo sa akin* (Thank you for your patience with me)."

Later, Christian explained to the INQUIRER that it was like going back to square one, since the last interview he gave was the one immediately after he won the search.

Crucial years

Christian was born in Balayan, Batangas but grew up in Tarlac. By any measure, he was at an awkward stage when, at 14, he followed his parents to Copenhagen. He had a difficult time adjusting to his new environment.

Aching for friends, he found comfort in watching the swans in a pond near their house. He fed them bread that his mother, Maria Louisa, brought home from work. She said he spoke to the birds in Filipino. "He would hurl the bread, saying, '*Mga kaibigan, eto na ang pagkain niyo*' (My friends, here is your food)."

Aside from bird watching, Christian kept himself busy studying Danish. He worked in a supermarket, arranging shelves. And like any typical teenager, he was soon spending a lot of time chatting online.

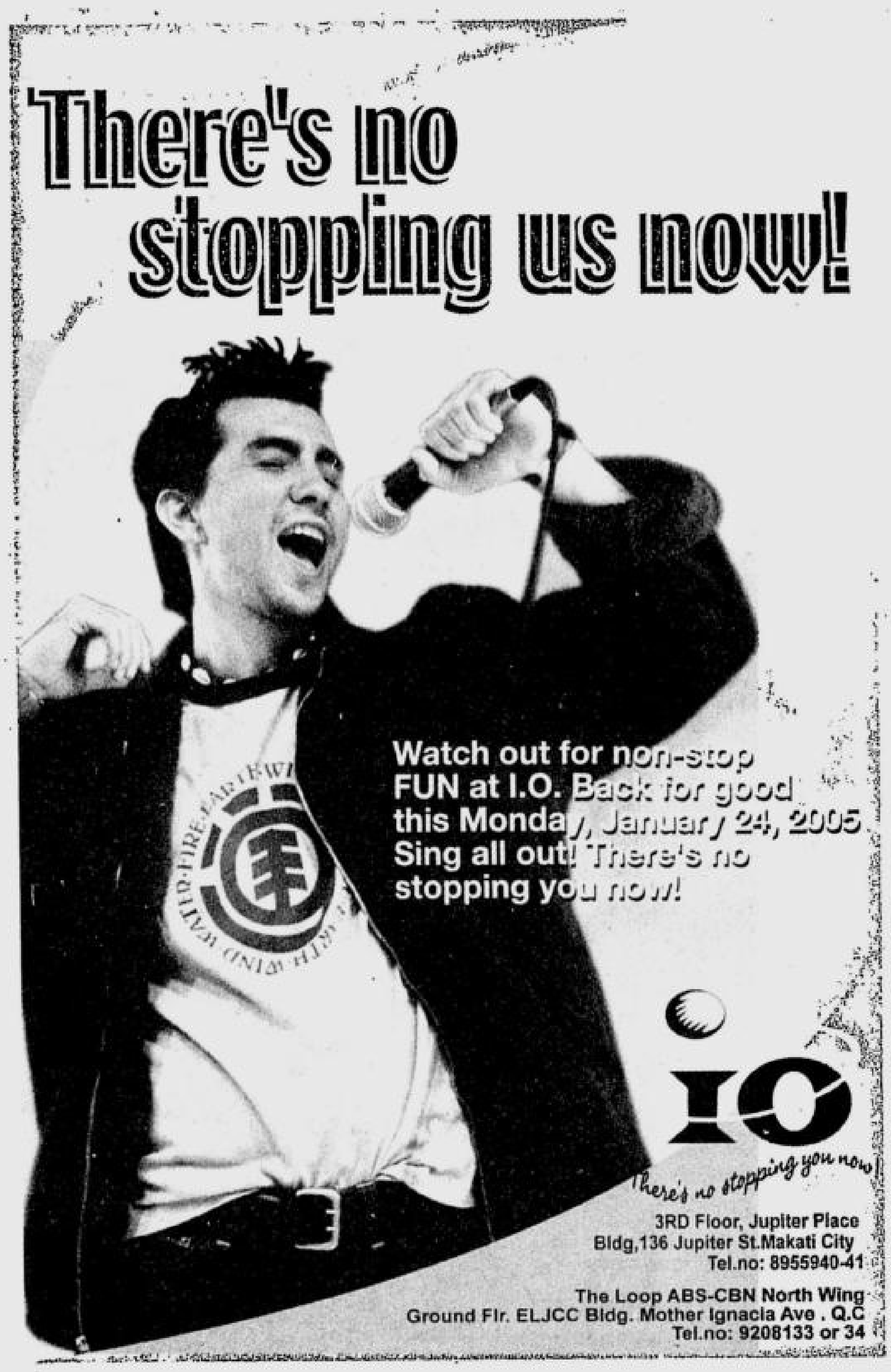
He missed Pinoy food very much, especially pork *sinigang* and *adobong kangkong*. "*Kangkong* is expensive there. A small bundle is worth P180," he said.

"I've spent a lot of time in fast food joints since I arrived," Christian said. "In Batangas, I feasted on *kamoteng maruya*."

His parents had separated by the time he made it to "Denmark Idol," but his mother and stepfather were all the cheering team Christian needed, it turned out.

Maria Louisa skipped work every Wednesday so she could go with him.

'DENMARK/ A38



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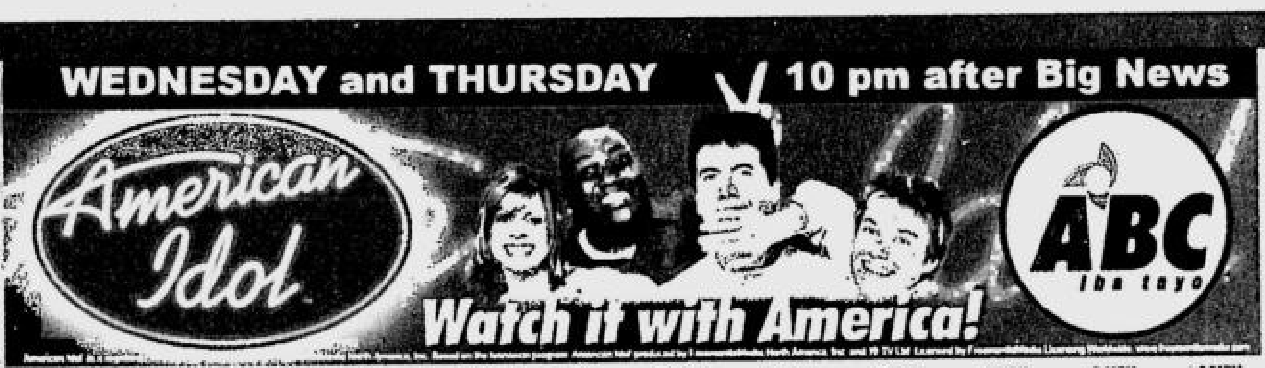
Monday, January 24, 2005



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ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Sprits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	OK Fine! Whatever	-		Insider	The Correspondents
NBN	Value Vision				Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		The Working President	Concert at the Park			Dial M	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	Art Is-Kool	Anime Ring Kaisho				Sentro	Friends	The Apprentice		Fear Factor		Big News	Pops!		Extreme Island	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3.15 PM)	Snow Angel (3.45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8.45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9.15 PM) Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita			Saksi		
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By, Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Sex & the City		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		Retro TV		V League				Good Take	IBC News Tonite	Linawin Natin	
Solar		Wow		Slamball		Rastol	Zeta Project	Mucha Lucha!	Spiderman	Deep Space Nine		Greatest Martial Arts Knockouts/ 2004 WWE Royal Rumble							
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX		Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	OPM MYX Countdown		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		The O.C.		Saturday Night Live		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	JKX	Meet My Folks		Queer Eye For A Straight Guy		Dateline		Nip/ Tuck	
Cinema One		Nasyong Nandito Ka				Gumapang Ka Sa Lusak				Weyt A Mint Kapeng Mainit				Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan				Hari Ng Selda	
Studio 23	Bewitched	Survivor: Thailand						Batman Animated Series	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	World's Craziest Video	Jake 2.0		Charmed		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Travel Time
AXN		24		24		The Right Stuff II	Rated X	Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster		Fear Factor		The Outer Limits		24		24	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	That 70s Show	Everybody Loves Raymond	Grounded For Life	Becker	Breaking The Magician's Code/ The Casino		Friends	That 70s Show
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	Living Golf	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Killer Instinct	Totally Wild	Be The Creature		Planet Wild	Wildlife Detectives	The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials/ "Built For The Kill: Bird Of Prey		Killer Instinct/Last Maneater: The Killer Tigers Of India/Totally Wild		Be The Creature	
Solar Sports		In This Corner		Superstars		Greatest Classics				Sagupaan		NBA Jam L010	NBA TV Daily	NBA Game: New Jersey @ Phoenix					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! True Hollywood Story		Behind The Velvet Ropes	Area		Breathing Room	Genuine Article	Bani Maxwell Show	Modern Girl's Guide
HBO				Ride Or Die (4.10 PM)			High Risk (5.40 PM)			Wedlock (7.15 PM)				Ballistic: Ecks Vs. Sever			Six Feet Under 29: The Eye Inside		Excess Baggage (11.20PM)
Star Movies	The Bread My Sweet			The Paradise Virus (4.15 PM)			The Assassination File				Fear (7:25 PM)			Cruel Intentions			Darkman		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		2004 Acc/Big 10 Chall: Wake Forest vs Illinois		World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zee, Holland		Spanish Football League 2004/05				Eng. Premier League Highlights 04/05		Sportscenter Taiwan	AFC Championship Game						Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	Lone Hero			Spartacus						Elmore Leonard's Gold Coast				Milk Money			Deadly Swarm (10.45PM)		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Dynasty: Behind The Sex, Greed, Manipulation				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Agency II		Child Of Our Time		Frankenstein			Just Cause (10.35PM)		Agency II (11.25PM)
Discovery Channel		Mythbusters		Monster Garage		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Unsolved History				Wild Discovery -		Ultimate Discovery		Civilisations	
MTV Philippines		MTV Lokal		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	MTV U-Break	Molo:	MTV Brand New	MTV Fashionista	TRL		Cribs	Spring Break	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus		Golf Academy 2002	Inside the PGA	Acc basketball Virginia @ Duke				Mastercard C'ships 3rd rd.						NFC Championship					
EWTN	St. Matthew	Angelus (3.15 PM)	Benediction And Devotion	Story Keepers	Image Of God	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Light Of The East II	Voices On Virtue	EWTN Gallery	Threshold Of Hope Encore		Sunday Night Live With Fr. Groeschel		Daily Mass		Angelus (10.15PM)	G.K. Chesterton	Catholic Compass	

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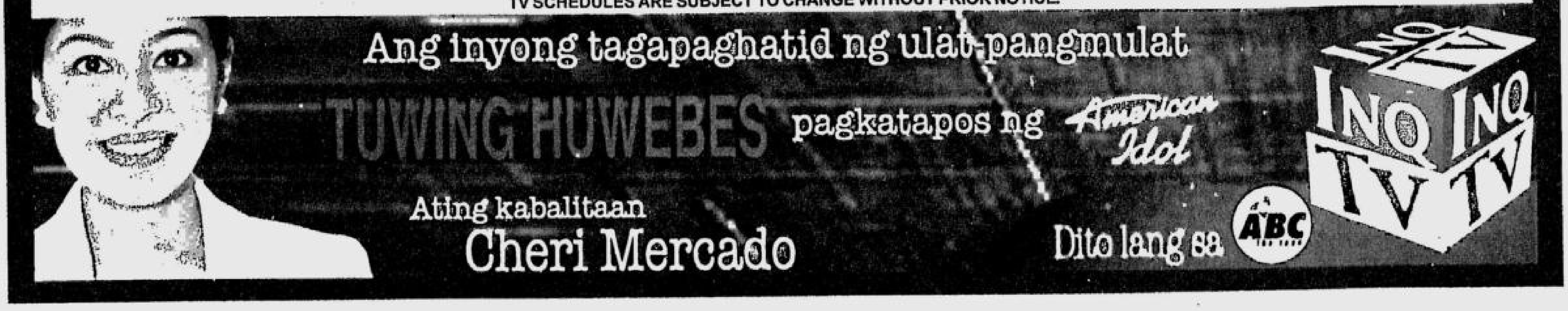

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Gov't cuts '05 deficit target to ₱177B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government has lowered its official budget deficit target for 2005, saying the positive budget performance last year coupled with newly approved revenue sources would result in a better fiscal picture.

The Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC), the inter-agency body that sets the government's economic policies and targets, said the budget deficit was targeted to reach only between P177 billion and P180 billion this year. It had set an original ceiling of P184.5 billion.

This means that the 2005 deficit is only expected to reach not more than 3.5 percent of gross domestic product, better than the original deficit-to-GDP target of 3.6 percent.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the reduction of the deficit target for 2005 would also bring down the expected consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD), or the combined shortfalls of the national government, local government units and state-owned companies.

From the original program of 5 percent, the DBCC now expected the CPSD to reach only 4.7 percent of GDP this year.

"Because of our very good revenue performance last year, we were able to pay off some of our obligations and therefore reduce our accounts payables," said Boncodin, who is also chair of the DBCC.

She said the government's higher-than-expected revenue collection in 2004 made the Department of Budget and Management, responsible for programming expenditures, to shorten the lag time in the payment of liabilities to suppliers and contractors. From the previous four months, the average lag time is now only at one-and-a-half months.

The Department of Finance earlier announced that the budget deficit for 2004 reached P186.1 billion, or P11.7 billion lower than the official target of P197.8 billion. This means that the deficit last year stood at only 3.9 percent of gross domestic product, or better than the targeted deficit-to-GDP ratio of 4.2 percent.

The better-than-programmed deficit last year was attributed to the strength in revenue collection. Although the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the biggest revenue contributor, missed its P476.3-billion target by about P6 billion, other revenue collection agencies like the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Treasury delivered more revenues than expected.

Aside from the government's deficit performance last year, the passage of the "sin" taxes bill and implementation of administrative measures aimed at beefing

GOV'T/B10

Toyota seeks tax perks for ₱1.47-B project

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INDUSTRY leader Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. is applying for incentives with the Board of Investments for a P1.47-billion venture to design and manufacture locally a new commercial vehicle.

BOI documents showed that TMCP submitted its application for pioneer status of the project last December.

The company proposed to make a new commercial vehicle, dubbed the IMV Innova, which was registered on June 1, 2004, as a new basic model under EO 156.

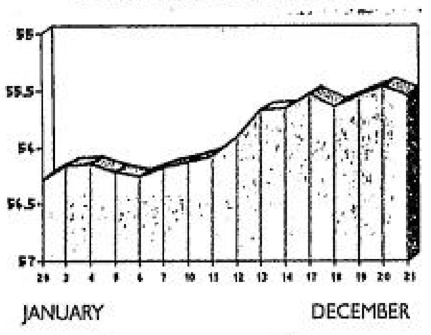
EO 156, which Malacañang issued in December 2002, laid down a comprehensive industrial policy and directions for the Motor Vehicle Development Program and its implementing guidelines.

TMPC, which is 60 percent Filipino-owned and 40 percent Japanese-owned, is a registered participant of the MVDP for the assembly of commercial vehicles like the Revo and passenger cars like the Corolla and Camry.

TOYOTA/B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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¥ 103.62 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 21, 2005

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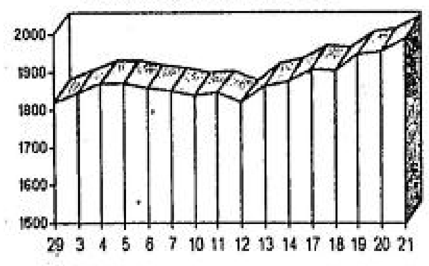
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 19, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Profit-taking seen this week

THE OUTLOOK for stock prices this week seem to be mixed as analysts expect the market's recent bullrun to start losing steam. Others, however, disagree since the economic picture is getting brighter.

"Sheer positive momentum that has snowballed is prompting people to put their money to work, regardless of valuation or how overbought the market is. We have a favorable, modest, sustainable kind of economic environment that stocks perform pretty well in, but we don't feel comfortable with the rate of increase in the past weeks. Most stocks are already at overbought levels and a consolidation or mild correction should do well for the market," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities Inc.

Buying last week was frenzied as the main index surged 112 points week-on-week or almost 6 percent to 1,987.84, the index's highest close in nearly five years.

A lot of the interest was in mining stocks after the Philippine Chamber of Mines said that a Philippine roadshow in China was able to generate $1.3 billion in investment commitments. The mining index was up 19.35 percent week-on-week on gains by Philex Mining, Manila Mining, Abra Mining and Lepanto Consolidated Mining, analysts said.

Good news was also heard from the foreign exchange market as the peso touched a new eight-month high at P55.46 to the dollar.

Despite the general optimism, the positive

PROFIT-TAKING/B3

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World oil prices may have gone up, but RP firm won't hike rates yet

By Abigail L. Ho

WORLD oil prices may have started to pick up again due to a number of factors, but industry leader Petron Corp. is not expected to raise pump prices any time soon.

"(Global prices) have increased to certain levels, but (there are) indications ... that this may just be a spike because of seasonality," Petron president Khalid Al-Faddagh said in an interview last Friday. "We don't react to spikes. We're more consistent in our pricing."

Al-Faddagh said Petron currently saw no strong indications of a price increase. If the increase in world oil prices would be sustained, then the effects on local oil firms, including Petron, would be drastic.

But this would not mean that Petron would implement a pump price increase any time soon.

The benchmark Dubai crude has been on an uptrend lately, breaching the $40-a-barrel mark last week in the spot market. From the December average of $34.20 a barrel, Dubai crude is now averaging around $37-$38 a barrel this month.

Industry observers believe that the run-up to the election in Iraq has contributed to the uptick in world oil prices the past few days.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) is also considering another output cut.

Apart from global factors, an expected key contributor in the possible increase of local pump prices would be the recent higher tariff on crude and refined petroleum product imports.

"Based on current prices, due to the additional tariff alone, a 40-centavo increase could be expected," an industry source said.

The Department of Energy, through a department circular, triggered the tariff increase to 5 percent effective Jan. 1 from only 3 percent.

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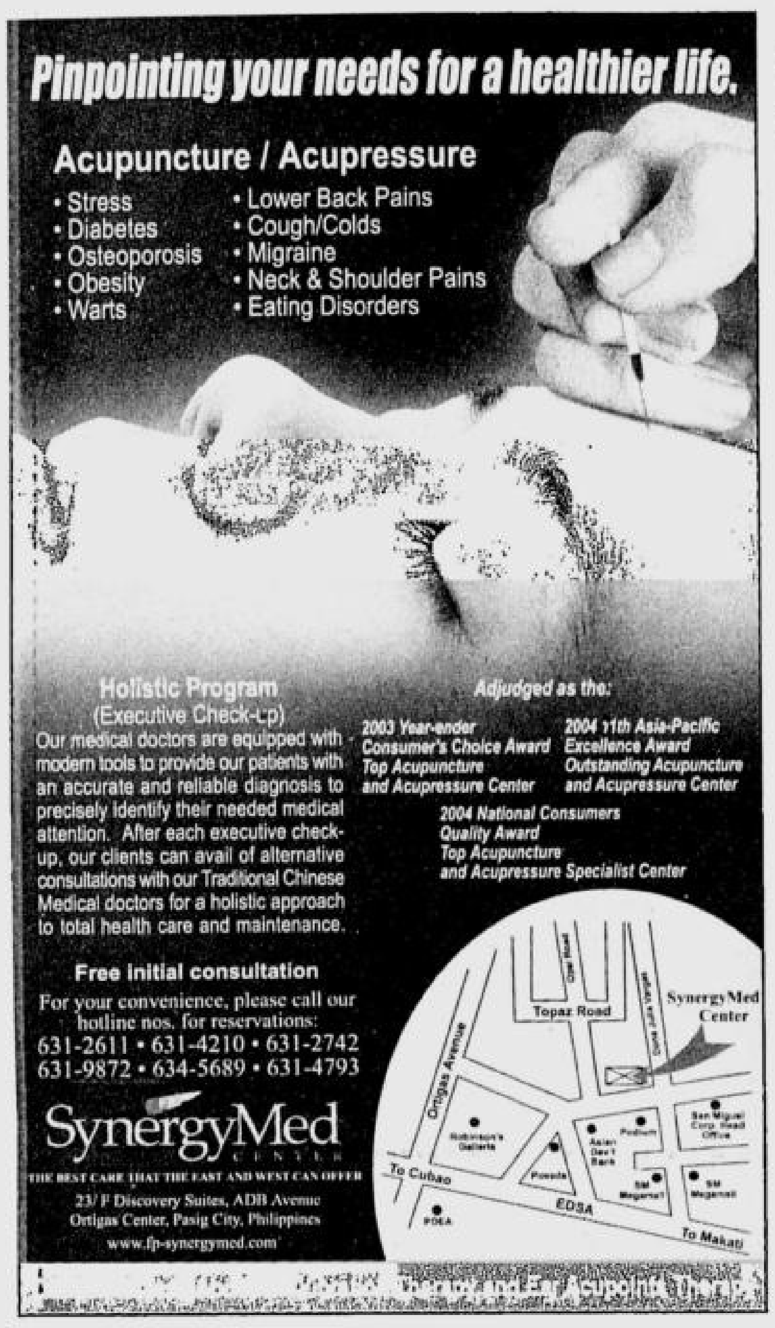

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SEC to recommend closure of troubled pre-need firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A SECURITIES and Exchange Commission committee will recommend the closure of Asian Diamond Plans Inc., since no serious investor has come forward to rescue the troubled pre-need firm.

According to a source in the commission, the SEC management committee may meet this week to recommend to the commission en banc the liquidation of ADPI.

The SEC this month extended ADPI's deadline for another two weeks to enable the firm to scout around for a white knight after its first deadline lapsed end of December.

The Commission en banc, the policy-setting board of the SEC, has yet to receive the recommendation.

In the absence of a rescuing investor to infuse fresh capital into Asian Diamond, a possible liquidation would preserve the company's current cash assets, the SEC source said.

This is important since there is a concern over whether the cash assets may be enough to settle plans beyond their five-year maturities, the source added.

Industry sources earlier said a Korean multinational marketing company was interested in investing in the pre-need firm.

A Filipino group belonging to the company's old management was also eyeing possible investment. But as of last week, no formal proposals had been made.

In the absence of a new investor, the SEC will distribute the assets of the pre-need firm among all its estimated 5,000 planholders, resulting in the shutdown of the company.

Assets of the company, including its trust fund, were estimated at roughly P67 million, consisting of its investment in property and cash of roughly P42 million in its trust fund, sources said.

The SEC issued a letter last year informing planholders of the status of the pre-need firm and of the regulator's plan to liquidate the company's assets if no investor steps forward by Dec. 31.

Industry sources said a British national, who was a former sales executive of CMG Insurance, was also interested in investing in ADPI.

The Briton had wanted to form a group of investors to invest in the pre-need firm, but the SEC had decided to wait for the investor to make good on his word.

To meet the SEC's P100 million paid-up capital requirement for pre-need firms, the investor may be allowed to infuse a minimum of P10 million in cash and P90 million worth of real assets to acquire ADPI's customer base.

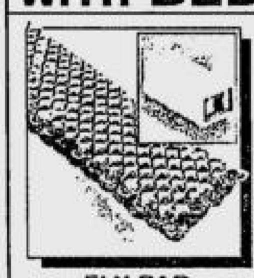
The ADPI stopped selling plans early last year. A few months later, the SEC formed a management committee to preserve the assets of the company and protect the interest of planholders.

The SEC last year found that Asian Diamond Plans had a trust fund deficiency of P13.5 million. To address the deficit, a US-Singapore group bought a major stake in the pre-need firm from previous shareholder Damaso Magbual.

The SEC has expressed concern over the infusion of new capital by the US-Singapore group, saying it was a loan and not fresh money.

The SEC earlier required pre-need firms to raise their paid-up capital base to at least P100 million in a bid to weed out fly-by-night operators and consolidate the industry.

The paid-up capital requirement led to mergers and acquisition talks among firms in the pre-need industry.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Global friends

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

THE REGIONS of Mindanao faced several challenges in its pursuit towards development the previous years. Its limited capacity to extend immediate support to disadvantaged communities has hampered its ability to fully heal and rebuild itself.

Due to these constraints, Mindanao has been the growing focus of many international support agencies, popularly known as Official Development Assistance (ODA).

I always think of them as our global friends who work in close partnership with us to ensure that life can be better in the island. Their investments range from schools and clinics, to safe water, power and electricity, roads, bridges, communication, business and trade support.

Mindanao's share

Based on the 2002 and 2003 total ODA disbursements nationwide, Mindanao has increased its ODA share from 7.9 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2003.

At the start of 2005, the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo) reported that there are 154 ongoing projects being implemented all over Mindanao, while 194 are in the pipeline.

This is an indication that there are many positive interventions currently being done quietly in Mindanao. The breakdown of the assisted sectors' share of total ongoing support and assistance reveals the priorities of the donor agencies.

To date, there are 50 infrastructure projects being realized, 47 for economic projects, 30 for administrations and 27 for social projects.

I am sure that once these projects are completed, we will have more trade linkages and better market access for our products. A small port or bridge can work wonders, especially for highly remote areas.

Being the food basket of the Philippines, Mindanao also receives substantial support from donor agencies to strengthen its capacities to meet the domestic and, potentially, international food demands.

In the first half of 2004, P51.925 billion were poured into 45 agricultural projects, of which P32.259 billion were in the form of loans, P2.833 billion in grants, P16.732 billion in counterpart fund.

To be able to sustain the projects, the Department of Agriculture has proposed a budget of P2.042 billion in counterpart fund for this year.

Although Mindanao is a beautiful, vast land filled with opportunities, it also faces economic difficulties, internal conflict and deprivation of quality education, health and basic services.

Recognizing the potentials of Mindanao, one would not wonder why every support extended is significant to its people. Through toughly designed ODA projects, communities in the outskirts, trapped in the middle of conflict, have been pulled out and taken to secured areas.

Through infrastructure projects, bridges and roads are being built, thereby connecting communities and markets. Truly, when a development project is being implemented through ODA, the unfortunate families and deprived individuals in Mindanao are being given hope and new opportunities for a better life.

ODA projects

Many bilateral and multilateral assistance in Mindanao have great impact on its direct and indirect beneficiaries. The USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM), the World Bank's Mindanao Rural Development Program, and the ARMM Social Fund Project, are some of the programs spurring overall development in Mindanao.

The Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM-2) Program of the USAID has carried out 128 community infrastructure projects and six mid-scale infrastructure projects throughout the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (CAMM).

These include road and bridge improvements, footbridges, community centers, new jetties, community water systems and port improvements—estimated to benefit approximately 100,000 families, including families of former MNLF combatants.

The ARMM Social Fund Project, which runs until 2009, was created to increase the access of the conflict-affected and poor communities in ARMM to basic social services through community development, provision of strategic regional infrastructure, and strengthening of local governance and partnership. It improved facilities for health, education, manpower development, social services and port facilities in the regions.

The Mindanao Rural Development Program is among the largest ODA loan-funded projects in the country, covering Regions 11, 12, 13, and the ARMM. The MRDP was designed to increase the income and improve the food security of targeted agricultural and fishermen communities, thus reducing poverty and improves equity within its adopted areas.

ODA partners

There are other donor agencies that continue to pursue progress and growth in the area. The Australian, Japanese, Spanish and Canadian governments, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the German Technical Cooperation, among others, have been longtime partners of Mindanao.

I had personally been involved in quite a few yet significant ODA programs, and I had seen the visible effects of these projects.

The GEM program had tremendously helped empower the various industry and business groups through technical assistance in advocacy, networking, market and trade access.

The Asia Foundation's Transparent Accountable Governance program brought together the LGUs, NGOs and business groups in reducing corruption in their communities; the Phil-Australia Quality Technical Vocational Education Training (PAQTVET) program urged industry and technical schools to work together to ensure quality Mindanao manpower.

Working and collaborating together, the donor agencies, our government and the NGOs are making cumulative efforts and attaining success in turning Mindanao into a truly wonderful place that it naturally is.

(Joji Ilagan-Bian is a strong advocate for Mindanao's development; member of the Export Development Council and former chair of the Mindanao Business Council ; vice chair of the Mindanao Commission of Women and National Corn Board; chair of the Mindanao TVET Association. E-mail comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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Gubernatorial guessing game

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IT looks like banker OV Espiritu has the presidential ear for the central bank governorship.

The former Far East Bank president was seen in Baguio's Camp John Hay Dec. 26, in deep discussion with no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo.

According to the grapevine, the President summoned Espiritu, who also happened to be in the Pines City at that time, and the two held a long talk and walk right in the golf course while GMA was in the midst of a game.

This tidbit prompted one banker to put his money on Espiritu to succeed Rafael Buenaventura when the latter's term expires 160 days from today.

In addition to being a Malacañang nominee to the San Miguel board, Espiritu, so we heard, was one of the only three businessmen who accompanied GMA to the recent Apec summit in Chile, the other two being port services king Enrique Razon Jr. and presidential adviser Roberto Romulo.

The only dark cloud hanging over Espiritu's appointment is his inability to secure an out-of-court settlement with Far East Bank colleague Vicente Panlilio, whose nose had been rearranged after Espiritu's fist landed as a result of temperamental malfunction in a pre-New Year 2003 outburst.

Another senior banker that should be available happens to be Xavier Loinaz, the just retired president of Bank of Philippine Islands.

Loinaz's upside: The Ayalas and the Edsa I and II backers, not to mention his considerable experience in M-and-As and their attendant headaches.

Downside? Loinaz bawls out people—GMA does—which may be good in shaping up lethargic bureaucrats but anathema to face-saving locals.

Having said all that, there are those, one of them former Bangko Sentral Governor Gabriel Singson, who still believe that SEC Chair Fe Barin is the "dark horse" to beat.

After all, not only was she a career central banker and longtime secretary to the Monetary Board, Barin's husband, a lawyer, worked for the late President Macapagal, GMA's father. And Barin, like GMA, happens to also be a Cafamfangan.

Barin was a guest at Wednesday's annual new year reception tendered by the BSP governor and, despite the January smog at the open air cocktails being hazardous to people of a certain age, the SEC chief stayed on until almost all the guests had left, past 9 p.m., savoring her old stomping ground.

Barin's line when asked if indeed she was the next guv? "I will go wherever the President orders me to go."

But should GMA consider deep selection and choose a career official, the smart money is on Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., who is at ease with and popular among the international financial community and the cantankerous UP economics group, he being from UP Diliman as well.

Even better, "Say" Tetangco happens to be a member of the Chosen Race. Like GMA, Tetangco hails from Pampanga.

Should Tetangco get lucky, expect Assistant Governor Nestor Espenilla to then move up to deputy governor in charge of supervision.

Money-go-round

- RESTAURATEUR Larry Cruz has apparently hit the mother lode with his two-year-old Café Havana in Greenbelt 3—eclipsing

COCKTALES/ B4

Profit-taking

From page B1

energy was somewhat drained after Standard & Poor's Ratings Services on Monday slashed the sovereign rating for the Philippines, saying the cut reflected the government's insufficient response to its fiscal problems.

"(But) the markets didn't react to the downgrade as it was more or less expected. In fact, the markets have already discounted downgrades of two notches from the rating agencies. Moreover, the markets were pleased when S&P raised its outlook on the country to stable, eliminating concerns of more downgrades going forward," Vistan wrote in a weekly report.

He added that what instead hugged the business headlines was the government's 2004 full-year budget deficit of P186.1 billion or 3.9 percent of gross domestic product, a key measure of the economy's financial health. The number announced was below the target ceiling of P197.8 billion.

"The performance was due primarily to higher tax receipts from the Customs bureau, especially on imported oil products. Optimism is being further strengthened by the government's thrust for fiscal reforms.

Congress has approved the attrition bill, which seeks to improve the government's tax collection through a system of incentives and penalties for employees of revenue-collection agencies. Also last week, the National Economic and Development Authority said that 2004 GDP growth might be above 6.1 percent in 2004, well above the government's target of 4.9-5.8 percent. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Toyota seeks tax perks . . .

From page B1

The new commercial vehicle model, IMV Innova, is so named because it is designed as an "innovative, multipurpose vehicle."

TMPC said the IMV Innova will have a seating capacity of eight, "a new body style with larger body size and advanced design, and new advanced interior and exterior features."

Also, the new vehicle will use a new platform designed for higher gear transmission, new frame and suspension, and newly developed engines.

The assembler wants pioneer status for the project, saying that the IMV Innova is a generic vehicle that is designed and suited for the Asian market. Such feature is one of the crite-

According to the BOI, the required minimum annual exports to qualify for pioneer status is 10,000 completely built units of passenger cars and commercial vehicles.

In its application, Toyota said it planned to make 13,020 IMV Innova units yearly in its assembly plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

TMPC plans to fund the project entirely with equity. The project is expected to create 1,233 new jobs.

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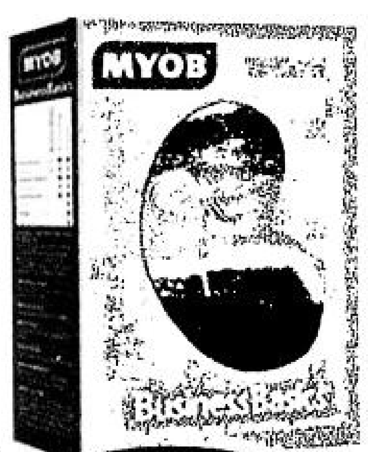

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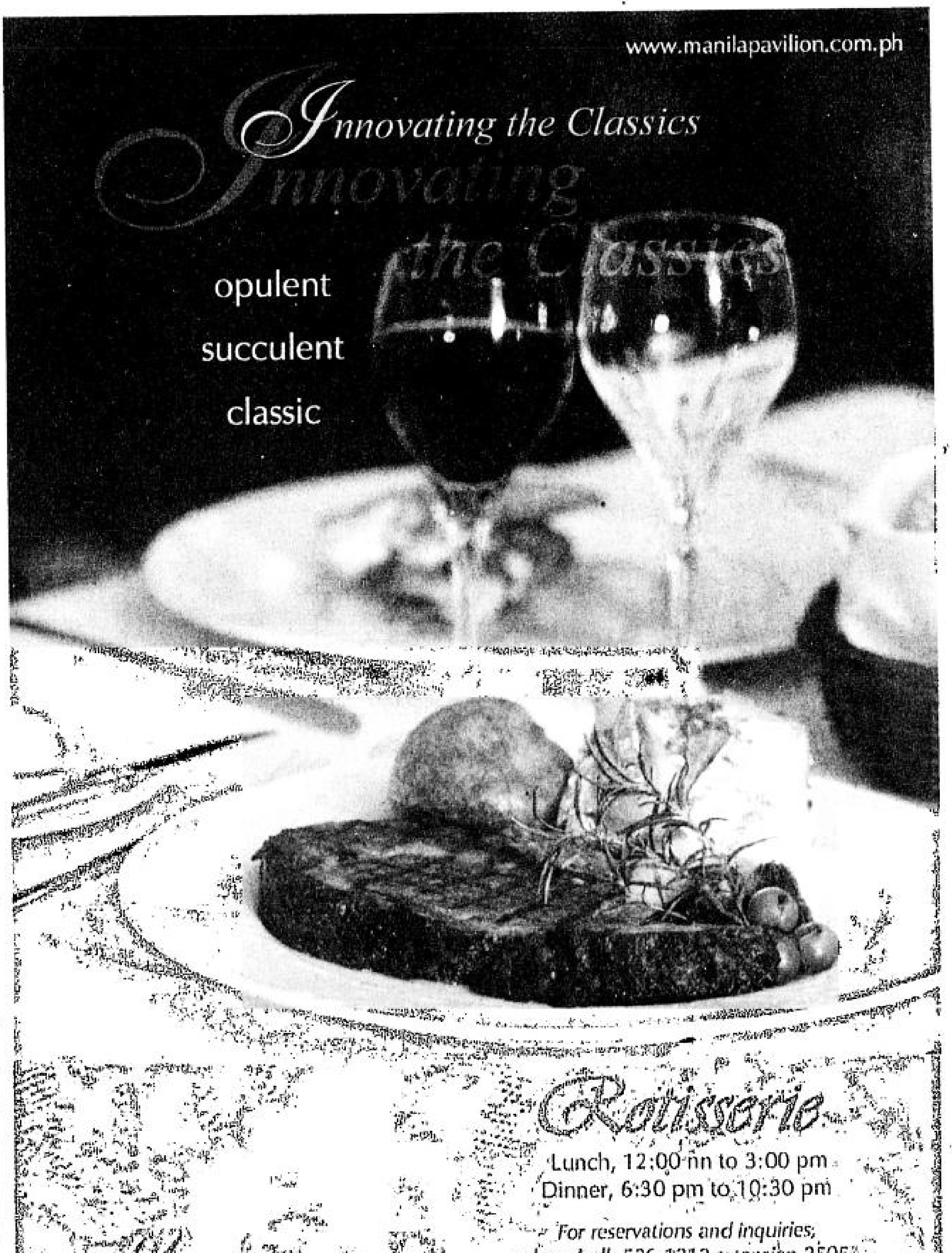

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UP FROM 2003, BUT MISSES TARGET

Bayantel revenue hit P5.4B in 2004

By Clarissa S. Batino

BAYAN Telecommunications Inc., the phone company of the Lopez Group, has booked revenue of about P5.4 billion in 2004 against nearly P5 billion in 2003, a senior official said.

However, Bayantel chief consultant Tunde Fafunwa admitted that the company's sales last year were below the target of P5.7 billion.

While the subsidiary of Benpres Holdings Corp. had been in the red during its 11 years of operations, Bayantel said profitability was not an issue for a company undergoing financial rehabilitation.

In 2005, Bayantel was still counting on hitting revenue of P6 billion from almost 280,000 fixed-line subscribers at the start of the year, Fafunwa said.

He said the company's subscribers would go up to more than 300,000 this year and double in five years as Bayantel expands to new voice and data markets.

Fafunwa said the more important thing to focus on would be the company's capacity to settle its debt and finance operations as reflected by a measure called Ebitda or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Ebitda reached slightly above P2 billion in 2004, up by 13 percent from the previous year.

This year, the company is targeting an Ebitda of P2.2 billion, according to Bayantel chief finance officer Salvador Tirona. He said there were delays in the impact of marketing on sales, thus the lower-than-target revenue for 2004.

Fafunwa said the company would spend another P1.3 billion this year, the same amount in 2004, to boost its growing voice and data businesses, especially the Internet.

Fixed-line and international long distance are also strong growth areas for the group.

Despite being in the red, Bayantel completed its investment in a $10-million upgrade of a nationwide backbone facility jointly owned by several other telecom players.

National Digital Transmission Network, a consortium of almost all local landline operators, upgraded the nationwide backbone infrastructure for local exchange to 10 gigabyte per second from 2.5 gigabyte.

The 400-percent expansion in the capacity would allow the network to handle increased traffic, similar to a road widening to decongest a highway. "The delivery of reliable and quality long-distance services, cellular traffic, high-speed data, video, Internet, broadcast signals and other communication services in major cities and localities will be assured," Fafunwa said during Friday's launch of the network expansion.

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Baguio Country Club	-	600,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	50,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	-	70,000
Camp John Hay	170,000	200,000
Canlubang	450,000	550,000
Canyon Woods	-	150,000
Capitol Hills	100,000	120,000
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,900,000
Celebrity Sports Club	-	140,000
Club Filipino	100,000	170,000
Eagleridge "A"	-	250,000
Eagleridge "B"	-	300,000
Eagleridge "C"	-	350,000
Forest Hills "A"	-	130,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	190,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	220,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	240,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	240,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	Please Call	-
Manila Golf (Individual)	10,500,000	-
Manila Polo	2,100,000	2,250,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	300,000	400,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	650,000	700,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	380,000
Metroclub "A"	100,000	130,000
Mimosa (Individual)	140,000	170,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	275,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	-	250,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	-	300,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	220,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	-	350,000
Quezon City Sports Club	140,000	180,000
Rockwell	230,000	300,000
Spa & Lodge	500,000	650,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,200,000	1,400,000
Sta. Elena "B"	1,450,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	-	170,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	120,000
Tagaytay Country Club	350,000	430,000
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	800,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	700,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	150,000
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Alta Vista A/B*	-	220,000*
Baguio Country Club	Pls. Call	-
Calatagan Golf	60,000	-
Camp John Hay	Pls. Call	-
Canyon Woods	160,000	100,000
Capitol Hills	130,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,650,000	1,300,000
Celebrity Sports	130,000	-
City Sports Club Cebu	-	Pls. Call
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	225,000/300,000*/Pls. Call**	-
Eastridge B	-	120,000
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	130,000/220,000**	160,000*
Luisita Golf	320,000	-
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	11,000,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	-
Manila Polo	2,250,000	-
Manila Southwoods A/B*	400,000/Pls. Call*	350,000/640,000*
Makati Sports Club	Pls. Call	165,000
Metropolitan Club A/B*	180,000/200,000*	100,000/130,000*
Mimosa C2/C3*	220,000	280,000*
Mimosa Golf Ind.	-	130,000
Mt. Malarayat A/B*	190,000	150,000/300,000*
Orchard A/B*/C**	200,000/280,000*/350,000**	
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	120,000/160,000*/200,000**	
Rockwell Leisure Club	280,000	-
Royale Tagaytay CC	80,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/110,000*/160,000**	
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	1,400,000	1,500,000*
The Palms Country Club	520,000	
Tagaytay Country Club	380,000	340,000
Tagaytay Midlands	700,000	650,000
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Valle Verde Ind.	120,000	100,000
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Camaya Spring	350K	
Camp John Hay		170K
Canyon Woods	125K	
Capitol Hills "A"		please call
Celebrity Sports Club	120K	-
Club Filipino	150K	
Eagleridge Golf Club "A"	200K	
Eagleridge Golf Club "B"	290K	
Eagleridge Golf Club "C"	280K	
Forest Hills "B"	150K	-
Makati Sports Club	200K	-
Mt. Malarayat "B"	please call	
Manila Golf Club - Indv		10M
Manila Polo Club	2.2M	2M
Manila Southwoods "A"	380K	
Manila Southwoods "B"		670K
Manila Yacht Club	250K	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	190K	
Orchard Golf Club "B"	-	280K
Orchard Golf Club "C"		-
Puerto Azul	60K	-
Quezon City Sports Club	145K	-
Riviera Golf Club "A"	70K	please call
Riviera Golf Club "B"		130K
Rockwell Leisure Club	380K	
Royal Tagaytay	-	55K
Sherwood Hills "C"		please call
Spa & Lodge	350K	500K
Sta. Elena Golf Club "B"		1.5M
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BANKS					
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Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	30	27.5	29.5	1,419,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	55	55.5	54.5	55	487,700
China Banking Corp.	575	580	575	575	1,100
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	1,200
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49.5	49.5	49.5	49.5	4,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	740,000
International Exch. Bank	17	17.75	17	17.75	452,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	28.5	30	28.5	30	7,408,200
Philippine National Bank	23.75	24.25	23.75	24.25	118,800
Phil. Savings Bank	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	3,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	12,000
Security Bank Corp.	32	32	32	32	204,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	25.5	26	25.5	26	43,600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	20,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.06	2.1	2.02	2.02	2,038,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	112	115	112	115	5,050
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1780	1790	1780	1780	1,320
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.75	19	18.75	18.75	48,900
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.88	1.96	1.86	1.92	28,951,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	925	935	925	935	61,000
Ipeople Inc.	3.9	4.05	3.9	4.05	38,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	300,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.036	0.038	0.036	0.036	17,600,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.22	2.22	40,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.55	3.85	3.55	3.85	39,911,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1415	1440	1410	1435	140,350
Ivantage Corp.	0.7	0.71	0.69	0.7	2,010,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	87,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17	17.5	17	17.5	185,100
Manila Electric Co. B	26.5	26.5	26	26	683,900
Petron Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.45	3.5	3,377,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.12	1.16	1.12	1.14	537,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	24,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.9	1,487,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	6,600,000
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Fortune Cement Corp.	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	340,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.2	3.6	3.2	3.45	8,241,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	160,000
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Alaska Milk Corp.	3.05	3.05	3	3	20,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	13,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27.5	28.5	27.5	28.5	396,800
RFM Corp.	0.71	0.74	0.71	0.74	460,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58.5	58	58.5	52,000
San Miguel Corp. B	78	78.5	78	78.5	44,600
Universal Robina Corp.	9.6	9.6	9.6	9.6	6,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	350,000
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Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	7,500
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.007	0.008	0.007	0.008	303,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.007	0.008	0.007	0.008	81,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.9	8.2	7.8	8.2	16,671,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.34	0.35	0.33	0.35	1,130,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.65	3.9	3.65	3.9	2,815,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	12	12.75	12	12	39,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.027	14,200,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.94	2.02	1.94	2	1,044,000
APC Group Inc.	0.17	0.2	0.17	0.195	24,090,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	387,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	50,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.22	1.18	1.22	70,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.5	21.5	21.5	21.5	14,100
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	.13	.13	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.92	0.96	0.91	0.92	25,350,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.185	0.19	0.18	0.185	9,870,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	700,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.19	0.21	0.185	0.185	19,010,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.45	4.55	4.35	4.45	7,946,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.035	0.035	0.032	0.032	4,400,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	477,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9.5	10	9.5	9.8	5,481,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	37	37.5	36.5	37	1,548,200
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	210,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.0675	0.0725	0.0675	0.0675	12,600,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1	1.2	1	1.2	9,330,000
Ionics Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	80,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	21	21	21	21	10,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	790,000
Keppel Holdings	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	880,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.55	2,405,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.32	1.32	1,553,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	70,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.5	0.52	0.5	0.51	72,570,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	0.8	1	0.8	1	20,000
Polar Property Holdings	2	3	2	3	14,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.16	3,280,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	160,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	100,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	30,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.46	0.53	0.46	0.48	1,770,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.9	40,000
Unirvide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,130,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.18	0.18	40,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.22	0.235	0.22	0.235	1,610,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2	1,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.7	1.72	1.7	1.7	233,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0675	0.07	0.065	0.07	10,700,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.68	0.71	0.67	0.67	10,180,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.08	1.08	3,469,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.59	0.59	780,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.34	0.34	10,160,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	941,600
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8.2	8.6	8.2	8.5	15,153,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.68	0.78	0.68	0.78	420,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	8,040,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	220,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.39	0.4	18,230,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.36	1.4	1.36	1.4	6,606,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	1,030,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	1,740,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	2,000,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.46	2.48	2.46	2.48	60,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.23	0.23	0.21	0.21	1,570,000
SM Development Corp.	1.44	1.46	1.44	1.46	150,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.5	8.7	8.5	8.6	3,810,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.65	0.7	0.65	0.68	850,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.68	0.73	0.68	0.68	750,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.014	473,600,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.3	7.3	5.3	6.7	3,214,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.8	4.6	3.8	4.4	167,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.9	3	2.9	3	133,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.006	950,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.08	1.3	1.08	1.24	32,552,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.24	1.42	1.24	1.34	26,486,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.23	0.28	0.23	0.28	1,970,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	56,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.005	0.005	0.0048	0.0048	82,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0075	0.0065	0.007	738,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	436,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.27	0.32	0.27	0.31	350,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.28	0.36	0.28	0.36	410,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	14,200,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.46	2.5	2.46	2.48	60,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.0825	0.09	0.0825	0.0825	23,200,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	2,910,000

CURRENCIES

January 21, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.771129	1.000000	55.4830
Japan	Yen	0.007461	0.009676	0.5369
United Kingdom	Pound	1.443862	1.872400	103.8864
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098884	0.128233	7.1148
Switzerland	Franc	0.648389	0.840831	46.6518
Canada	Dollar	0.625916	0.811688	45.0349
Singapore	Dollar	0.470861	0.610612	33.8786
Australia	Dollar	0.585430	0.759186	42.1219
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.045489	2.652590	147.1737
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.205629	0.266660	14.7951
Brunei	Dollar	0.469428	0.608754	33.7755
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019991	0.025924	1.4383
UAE	Dirham	0.209985	0.272309	15.1085
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.296800	71.9504
Argentina	Peso	0.262066	0.339847	18.8557
Brazil	Real	0.282879	0.366838	20.3533
Denmark	Kroner	0.134402	0.174292	9.6702
India	Rupee	0.017646	0.022883	1.2696
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.202956	0.263193	14.6027
Mexico	New Peso	0.068351	0.088637	4.9178
New Zealand	Dollar	0.542857	0.703977	39.0588
South Africa	Rand	0.127239	0.165003	9.1549
Korea	Won	0.000747	0.000969	0.0538
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024253	0.031451	1.7450

Cocktales

From page B3

even his popular Remedios Circle base—he now has expanded upstairs, to an Indian bistro bar, called appropriately enough, Bollywood. Dry run starts next week, formal opening slated March 8.

• TO THOSE who failed to watch the comical explanation of the wife of controversial Ortigas "businessman" Leonardo Umale over Pinky Webb's ANC show—why the Umales are charging parking fees on an Ortigas parking space despite the absence of a contract from the Ortigases themselves—Vicky Umale in so many words admitted the Umales enjoy the protective mantle of Pasig Mayor Vicente Eusebio.

Heard through the grapevine

TAGUIG Mayor Freddie Tinga has asked the Ayalas to furnish City Hall a certified copy of the construction contract of the just-finished Market!Market! so the city government could determine the proper amount of business tax that should be levied on the contractor of the more than P1-billion mall.

The contractor happens to be the Ayalas' own Makati Development Corp.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Cheap calls and family unity

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito Habito

IN A RECENT meeting with some economists, Neda Secretary Romulo Neri observed how the free telephone calls provided by a weekend TV show that permitted overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to speak with their family members here at home appear to mean so much to these people. The conversations made on the air range from poignant to comic, but one is struck at how large numbers of people are grabbing the opportunity to speak with their loved ones abroad for free, even if they have to forego privacy. Clearly, the 40 cents a minute being charged by the phone companies for overseas calls remains way too expensive for many, perhaps most, of the families of the OFWs to be able to call on a regular basis.

Five-cent calls

But these calls don't have to cost that much. Anyone who has traveled to the US, Japan or other countries knows that one can easily buy phone cards that permit calls to the Philippines (or any other country) for under 10 cents a minute, even for as low as five cents. What makes this possible is Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP), a technology that allows one to make telephone calls using a broadband Internet connection instead of a regular (analog) phone line, thereby avoiding the telephone companies' long distance charges. Some services using VoIP allow calls only to other people using the same service, but others allow calls to any telephone number—including local, long distance, mobile, /'and international numbers.

The technology has been around for many years, and some Internet service providers (ISPs) had begun to offer cheap overseas phone calls using VoIP—until they were stopped by the telcos, particularly lead player PLDT. In the absence of a specific law pertaining to Internet-based telephony in the country, PLDT along with other local telcos argue that they have the exclusive right to offer voice services in the country due to their existing franchise from Congress. PLDT has even sued several ISPs offering VoIP services.

Captured?

The issue has boiled down to whether VoIP should be classified as a telecommunication service or as a value-added service (VAS). If it is the former, then current law holds that ISPs and potential providers other than franchised public telecommunications entities (PTEs) may sell VoIP services only if the ISPs enter into separate agreements with these PTEs. If, on the other hand, VoIP is classified as a VAS or enhanced service, then nothing would stop ISPs and other potential non-PTE providers to offer VoIP as a separate and distinct service. Even NGOs wishing to provide the service to the poor could do so.

Meanwhile, from an earlier stance advocating the proliferation of VoIP as a more economical means of communicating, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) appears to have turned around and now appears to be siding with the telcos. Draft guidelines circulated by the NTC last year state that "only duly enfranchised and authorized PTEs may offer VoIP for compensation." The draft guidelines, circulated supposedly "for discussion," also specifically bars providers of VAS such as ISPs from offering commercial VoIP services.

The NTC had been further quoted as saying that allowing ISPs and non-telcos to sell VoIP will give "unfair competition" to telcos, citing that RA 7925 requires them to provide land line services to unserved and underserved areas in the country, while ISPs and other potential VoIP providers are not obliged to.

If this is an indication of the forthcoming decision the NTC is expected to issue within the first quarter of this year, then it would be a vote against competition and the wider public interest, and a vote in favor of protecting the narrow interests of the telcos. Some are beginning to see it as another example of a regulatory agency that has been "captured" by those whom it is supposed to regulate. If this is indeed true, then perhaps Congress can come to the rescue—assuming they are not yet similarly "captured."

In contrast, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has maintained that Internet and Internet-related services are unregulated, categorically classifying VoIP as an Internet-related service. To quote the FCC's website:

"The FCC has worked to create an environment promoting competition and innovation to benefit consumers. Historically, the FCC has not regulated the Internet or the services provided over it. On Feb. 12, 2004, the FCC found that an entirely Internet-based VoIP service was an unregulated information service. On the same day, the FCC began a broader proceeding to examine what its role should be in this new environment of increased consumer choice and what it can best do to meet its role of safeguarding the public interest."

Helping OFW families

Being true to his Cabinet title as Secretary of Socio-economic Planning (i.e. not just Economic Planning), Secretary Neri indicated in a recent speech that the government is looking to VoIP as a cheaper alternative to long-distance calls, especially to help families of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). If we cannot avoid having millions of our fellow Filipinos leave their families behind to earn their living overseas, then the least we can do for them is to minimize the likelihood that their families would break apart as a result. The ability to make frequent phone contact can be highly instrumental in keeping these OFW families intact. Forty-cent per minute overseas calls won't make this possible, but five-cent per minute VoIP calls certainly could. This is one very tangible service that NGOs focused on strengthening the Filipino family (and this includes churches all over the country) can very well provide—and should indeed be encouraged.

But let's not make it a crime for them to do so.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

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500,000 - 999,999	6.250	7.000	7.250	7.500
1.0MM - 4,999,999	6.875	7.250	7.500	7.750
5.0MM - 9,999,999	7.000	7.500	7.750	8.000
10 million and up	7.250	8.000	8.000	8.250

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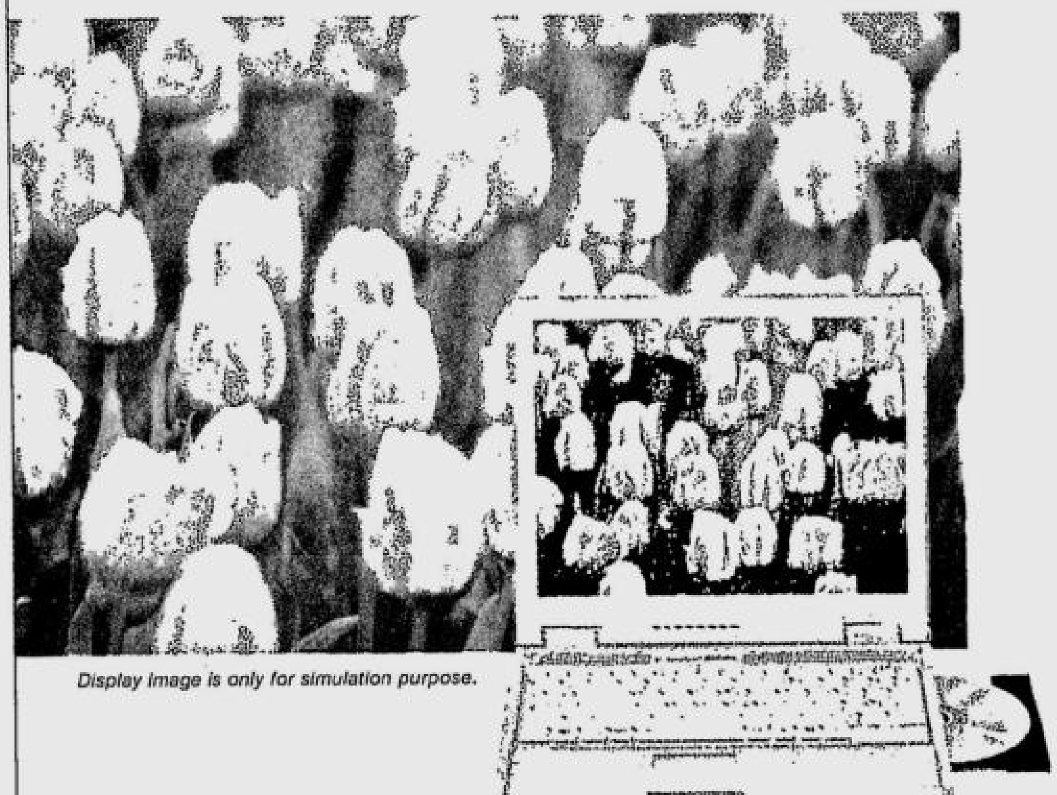

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- Microsoft® Office OneNote™ 2003
- Toshiba ConfigFree™ Connectivity Doctor
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- 512MB DDR SDRAM
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  Intel® PRO/Wireless Network Connection 802.11g
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- Microsoft® Office OneNote™ 2003
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- Metallic silver chassis at 2.8kg
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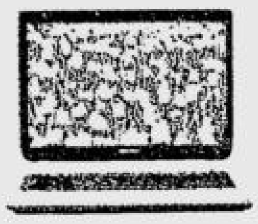
- CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive
- 15.0" (38.1cm) XGA TFT display
- ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 7000 IGP with up to 64MB shared Video RAM
- SRS TruSurround XT™ sound technology with internal stereo speakers
- 3 x USB 2.0, i.LINK (IEEE1394), S-Video TV-out and Fast InfraRed port
- 1-Year carry-in International Limited Warranty (parts and labor)



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  Intel® PRO/Wireless Network Connection 802.11g
- Microsoft® Windows® Home Edition
- Microsoft® Office OneNote™ 2003
- Toshiba ConfigFree™ Connectivity Doctor
- 256MB DDR SDRAM/40GB HDD with shock absorber
- Large 15.4" (39.1cm) WXGA TFT display
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX Go5200 with 64MB Video RAM
- DVD/CD-RW combo drive
- SD slot, 3 x USB 2.0, i.LINK (IEEE1394), Fast InfraRed and TV-out port
- Internal harman/kardon® stereo speakers
- Cool magnesium chassis at 2.8kg
- 1-Year carry-in International Limited Warranty (parts and labor)

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3 rural banks placed under PDIC receivership

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas recently ordered the closure of three small rural banks—Rural Bank of Vinzons, Banco Rural Legaspi and Banco Sorsogon.

The Monetary Board also placed these banks under the receivership of Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

The insured depositors of these banks are now being serviced, the PDIC said in a statement on Friday.

It said RB Vinzons, a single unit bank in Camarines Norte, was ordered closed by the Monetary Board last Jan. 6. PDIC reported that RB Vinzons was the fourth to benefit from the new maximum deposit insurance cover of P250,000 which took effect in August last year. The first three were First Savings Bank, Rural Bank of Culasi (Antique) and Ever Development Bank (Zambales).

Payment of claims

PDIC also announced the settlement of P4.89 million in insurance claims of RB Vinzons depositors. The pay-out started Jan. 11, or a few days after PDIC took over the bank on Jan. 7.

Five days from the start of the pay-out, PDIC had serviced 378 accounts or about 34 percent of RB Vinzons' 1,098 insured deposit accounts and about 82 percent of the estimated insured amount of deposit liabilities of P5.97 million.

The agency said it had likewise started paying insured depositors of Banco Rural Legaspi and Banco Sorsogon, which were shut down on Jan. 13.

Banco Rural Legaspi, established in 1956, has some insured deposit liabilities of P210.6 million that cover 6,675 insured deposit accounts. It is a five-unit rural bank with head office in Legaspi City and branches in Daet, Camarines Norte; Pili, Camarines Sur; Tabaco, Albay; and Naga City.

Deadlines

PDIC said it would accept insurance claims at the premises of the closed bank's head office and branches until Feb. 8, with the exception of Pili branch that will accept insurance claims onsite only until Jan. 27. After these dates, claims may be filed in person or by mail at the PDIC office up to Jan. 13, 2007.

Established in 1959, Banco Sorsogon is a four-unit rural bank with head office in Sorsogon City and branches in Gubat and Bulan, Sorsogon, and Daraga, Albay. Its estimated deposit insured liabilities amounted to P193.8 million covering 7,764 insured deposit accounts.

PDIC said it would service claims at the premises of the head office and Gubat branch until Feb. 8, and at the Bulan and Daraga branches until Feb. 2. After these dates, claims may be filed in person or by mail at the PDIC office up to Jan. 13, 2007.

The PDIC announced that after said dates of onsite payout, claims from depositors of said banks may either be filed personally or through mail; or followed up at the PDIC claims office in Ayala, Makati.

Depositors

Both Banco Rural Legaspi Inc. and Banco Sorsogon are owned by the Alfelor family of Iriga City.

Many depositors rushed to Banco Sorsogon, formerly known as Sorsogon Rural Bank, early Monday morning upon hearing the closure of the bank.

Most depositors are government employees, teachers, veterans and retirees who claimed that they had preferred the bank due to the high interest rates it offered compared to other rural and national banks in the area.

According to a retired female elementary school teacher, she was surprised and dismayed when she went to the bank on Monday to withdraw her time deposit that fell due that day only to discover that the bank was already under PDIC's control. *With reports from Jerico F. Lagonoy, Leo Martin B. Ganace and Michael B. Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau.*

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SECURITY BANK

Security Bank Centre
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(632) 867-6788

STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Head Office and Branches)
As of December 20, 2004

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items		P 1,441,937,622
Due from Bangko Sentral		1,042,322,599
Due from Other Banks		2,379,894,987
Interbank Loans Receivable		1,293,911,055
Trading Account Securities (Net)		5,581,267,604
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		23,915,106,504
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		36,908,887,181
Equity Investments (Net)		2,132,350,149
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		1,403,224,033
Other Assets (Net):		
Property Owned/Acquired		2,723,595,335
Others		3,895,777,949
TOTAL ASSETS		P 82,718,275,019
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits		P 13,390,918,538
Savings Deposits		20,120,413,368
Time Deposits		18,213,502,636
Special/Other Deposits		37,437,161
Due to Bangko Sentral		28,033,789
Due to Banks		467,763,715
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		249,884,097
Bills Payable:		
BSP-Rediscounts/Special Programs		279,208,437
Interbank Borrowings		12,196,270,990
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		251,162,968
Other Liabilities		3,669,013,646
Unsecured Subordinated Debt (incl. of Unamortized Premium/Discount)		2,998,853,504
TOTAL LIABILITIES		P 71,902,462,849
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock		P 4,981,626,239
Surplus		5,630,385,931
Surplus Reserves		203,800,000
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		10,815,812,170
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		P 82,718,275,019
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit		P 2,844,943,908
Bills for Collection		1,487,836,642
Spot/Future Exchange Bought		21,255,336,222
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		18,295,740,921
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		8,866,792,483
Invested in:		
Government Securities	P 2,861,918,416	
Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stock	291,676,129	
Loans and Discounts	4,127,929,572	
Other Assets	1,385,268,366	
Accountabilities:		
Trust and Other Fiduciary	1,671,761,049	
Common Trust Funds	2,491,837,935	
Investment/Fund Management	4,494,751,061	
Unearned Income and Other Accountabilities	8,442,438	
Other Contingent Accounts		507,910,250
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		P 53,058,560,426

OTHER INFORMATION:

1. Deposits of:	
a) Government	535,010,248
b) Banks	329,622,482
c) Trust Department	1,188,779,520

2. Compliance with Magna Carta Law:

	Small Enterprises	Medium Enterprises
Prescribed Ratio of Compliance:	6%	2%
Actual Compliance:	7.53%	12.52%

3. Amount of non-performing loans	3,274,413,507
4. Ratio of non-performing loans to total loan portfolio	8.17%
5. Amount of classified loans and other risk assets	14,461,972,000
6. General provision for loan losses	369,091,000
7. Specific provision for loan losses	2,417,178,300
8. Return on Equity (ROE)	7.22%
9. Amount of DOSRI loans/advances	2,669,333,900
10. Ratio of DOSRI loans/advances to total loan portfolio	6.66%
11. Amount of past due DOSRI loans/advances	0.00
12. Ratio of past due DOSRI loans/advances to total loan portfolio	0.00

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
CITY OF MAKATI)s.s.

We, Alberto S. Villarosa and Joselito E. Mape of the above mentioned Bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

(Sgd.) JOSELITO E. MAPE
Vice President

(Sgd.) ALBERTO S. VILLAROSA
President & CEO

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME this 13th day of January, 2005 at City of Makati, affiants exhibiting to me their Residence Certificate No. 15256740, issued at City of Makati on March 1, 2004 and Residence Certificate No. 15264096, issued at City of Makati on March 10, 2004.

(Sgd.) EDILBERTO H. MIRALLES
Notary Public
Until Dec. 31, 2004
PTR No. 7680004
01-28-2003; Makati City

Doc. No. 175
Page No. 35
Book No. XXXVII
Series of 2005

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Bank and its Subsidiaries and Affiliates)
As of December 20, 2004

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items		P 1,441,937,622
Due from Bangko Sentral		1,042,322,599
Due from Other Banks		2,380,256,699
Interbank Loans Receivable		1,293,911,056
Trading Account Securities (Net)		5,584,462,785
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		24,110,537,816
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		37,738,412,002
Equity Investments (Net)		124,246,221
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		1,452,421,892
Other Assets (Net):		
Property Owned/Acquired		2,791,911,984
Others		5,563,839,344
TOTAL ASSETS		P 83,524,260,020
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits		P 13,239,611,472
Savings Deposits		19,861,891,271
Time Deposits		18,213,502,636
Special/Other Deposits		37,437,161
Due to Bangko Sentral		28,033,789
Due to Banks		467,763,715
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		249,884,097
Bills Payable:		
BSP-Rediscounts/Special Programs		279,208,437
Interbank Borrowings		12,196,270,990
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		251,162,968
Other Liabilities		4,881,751,601
Unsecured Subordinated Debt (incl. of Unamortized Premium/Discount)		2,998,853,504
TOTAL LIABILITIES		P 72,705,371,641
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock		P 4,981,626,239
Surplus		5,633,462,140
Surplus Reserves		203,800,000
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		10,818,888,379
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		P 83,524,260,020
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit		P 2,844,943,908
Bills for Collection		1,487,836,642
Spot/Future Exchange Bought		21,255,336,222
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		18,295,740,921
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		8,866,792,483
Invested in:		
Government Securities	P 2,861,918,416	
Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stock	291,676,129	
Loans and Discounts	4,127,929,572	
Other Assets	1,385,268,366	
Accountabilities:		
Trust and Other Fiduciary	1,671,761,049	
Common Trust Funds	2,491,837,935	
Investment/Fund Management	4,494,751,061	
Unearned Income and Other Accountabilities	8,442,438	
Other Contingent Accounts		507,910,250
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		P 53,058,560,426

OTHER INFORMATION:

1. Deposits of:	
a) Government	535,010,248
b) Banks	329,622,482
c) Trust Department	1,188,779,520

2. List of Bank's Subsidiaries:
   - a) Security Finance, Inc.
   - b) SB Cards Corporation
   - c) SB Forex, Incorporated
   - d) SB Capital Investment Corporation
   - e) Security Land Corporation

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
CITY OF MAKATI)s.s.

We, Alberto S. Villarosa and Joselito E. Mape of the above mentioned Bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

(Sgd.) JOSELITO E. MAPE
Vice President

(Sgd.) ALBERTO S. VILLAROSA
President & CEO

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Alien documentation project to raise ₱1.5B

ECONOMIC Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the government stands to make a windfall of some P1.5 billion over the next 10 years from an alien documentation project of the Bureau of Immigration (BI).

NERI

Neri said the bureau had started its Alien Certificate of Registration Identification Card (ACR I-Card) project, which automated the registration process for foreigners on extended stay in the country. The technology puts all documentation requirements into a microchip-based identification card.

Neri said the BI project, which is expected to boost the government's drive against international terrorism, transnational crimes and drug trafficking, was approved by the National Economic Development Authority-Investment Coordinating Council (Neda-ICC) last year.

This is a build-operate-transfer (BOT) project, Neri said. He stressed that the BI project had no government guaranty and "involves no risk at all for the government."

Under the project, legal aliens in the country will pay US$50 for the ACR I-Card documentation. Some 87,500 foreigners in BI's official roster of legal aliens are expected to benefit from the high-technology service.

Neri said under the BOT arrangement, nearly 80 percent of the gross revenue of the project would go directly to the government.

The government's income stream comes from its 50 percent share in the annual gross revenue of the project, a guaranteed P30 million annual concession fee, and the corresponding value added and income taxes. This translates to about P190 million windfall for the government each year, Neri said.

The government is not spending a single centavo for this project. It is completely funded by the private sector consortium which also assumes all financial risks, Neri pointed out.

Neri lauded Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. for the project, noting that this "is the country's best contribution to the sustained global effort to combat terrorism."

The Fernandez initiative will make it very hard for terror groups to use the Philippines as a launching base for their operations, Neri pointed out.

In the meantime, Immigration Associate Commissioner Arthel Caronongan said the BI project also involves the putting up of special booths in international entry and exit points in the country for ACR I-Card holders. The card and the booths will expedite the entry and exit of legal aliens.

RP, Myanmar to hold air talks this week

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES is scheduled to hold air talks with Myanmar this week.

The move is in line with the country's plan to join an informal regional sub-grouping that includes Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, a senior aviation official said.

Tomas Mañalac, executive director of the Civil Aeronautics Board, said the country wanted to update its air services agreement with the CLMV group with the intention of joining the regional cluster. The grouping may also include Indonesia soon.

"Vietnam invited us, along with Indonesia, to join the CLMV group. We want to complete the CLMV talks within the first half," said Mañalac in an interview.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is encouraging the formation of regional subgroups to boost the flow of goods and services among member countries. Singapore, Thailand and Brunei have formed their own cluster earlier.

Mañalac said talks between the Philippines and Myanmar were scheduled for Jan. 25 to 26 in Myanmar.

Discussions with Myanmar will cover a basic air agreement and the allocation of entitlements to encourage carriers of both countries to start mounting flights, the CAB chief added.

For the first quarter of the year, the country's air panel had tentatively scheduled air talks with India and Iran. Talks with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam are being scheduled.

In 2004, the Philippines forged successful aviation deals with Japan and Nepal. Japan allowed an increase in Philippine flights weekly to several destinations in that country by about 14 while Nepal gave Philippine carriers enough entitlements to fly to Kathmandu once a day. The deal between the Philippines and Nepal is their first air services agreement.

Nepal also gave the Philippines a limited fifth freedom right by allowing local carriers to pass through Bangkok and pick up passengers before flying to Kathmandu.

"We have a basic air services agreement with Myanmar that has to be updated," said Mañalac.

The Philippines, said the CAB chief, wanted to take advantage of the growing tourism and information technology industries in India.

Myanmar, with a population of about 43 million, is near Bangladesh, China, India, Laos and Thailand. It has 79 airports, of which nine are paved.

In Cambodia, tourism is considered the fastest growing industry.

Investments seen hitting ₱200B this year

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INVESTMENTS registered with incentive-granting agencies of the government are expected to reach at least P200 billion by the end of this year.

The amount represents a 10-percent increase from the P183 billion registered in 2004.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez, who is also managing head of the Board of Investments, said in an interview that the projection was in line with the government's overall economic growth target this year.

Hernandez said the P200 billion projection for 2005 was on the low side considering that foreign and local investments in mining projects were expected to start flowing in this year.

The amount could be guaranteed since the government already has leads for at least P100 billion in investments in non-mining projects alone.

"When mining investments come in, the figure could exceed the P200-billion mark," he said.

Last week, Hernandez announced that one of the biggest mining companies in China had expressed interest to invest $100 million in a Philippine project.

He said at least 100 Chinese mining firms expressed interest in some 23 projects during a Philippine mining investment promotion roadshow held in Beijing last week.

Hernandez said interest from investors in other foreign countries were expected to be kindled at another mining forum to be held in the country in February.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines has invited at least 50 foreign investors and investment houses for the forum.

Investor interest in mining projects perked up after the Supreme Court issued a decision last Dec. 1 affirming that foreign mining companies can take part in the development of local mines.

In 2004, investments approved by the BOI and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority reached around P183 billion, an increase of 222 percent from the P56.7 billion posted in 2003.

Data from the Department of Trade and Industry showed that the power sector accounted for the biggest investment commitments last year.

These projects included GNPower Ltd.'s P96.52-billion combined cycle power plant that runs on liquefied natural gas and two of PNOC Energy Development Corp.'s geothermal projects—the P5.4-billion Negros project and the P2.58-billion Palinpinon 2 optimization project.

The biggest project, GNPower's proposed 1,200-megawatt power plant in Bataan, is a joint venture between Nauru-based Power Partners Ltd. and local firm PMR Ltd. Co.

SSS: Milking cow of solons?

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES
Honesto C. General

IF I HAVE said it once, I have said it a thousand times before. Lawmakers are, oh, so generous—with money that is not theirs.

Every time the legislature opens a new session, our lawmakers scramble to file bills that will give SSS members' money away.

Rep. Lorna Silverio (Lakas, 3rd District, Bulacan) filed Bill 962 to reduce the penalty of employers who were delinquent in their contributions from 3 percent to a ridiculous one-half percent monthly. She explained, "Many of the companies are adversely affected by the present economic crises [because of] the weakness of the Philippine currency coupled with the threatening increase of oil prices."

The bill will actually encourage employers' delinquency, one of the big problems at the SSS. The employer will find it cheaper to "borrow" the contributions from the SSS rather than take out a loan from a bank.

Rep. Roberto Cajes (Lakas, 2nd District, Bohol) filed Bill 3265. He wants the penalty to be reduced to one and one-half percent. This is better than the Silverio bill but it will encourage delinquency just the same.

The other part of the bill limits the basis for the contributions to basic pay only. All other remunerations, such as cost of living allowance, are excluded. This will weaken the SSS because contributions will go down while the level of benefits will remain the same.

Rep. Catalino Figueroa (KNP, Western Samar), under Bill 2015, wants the SSS to "set aside a portion of its Investment Reserve Fund for the livelihood credit needs of pensioners." The limits are modest enough, not less than P5,000, or more than P25,000. But when an employee retires, he has the option of getting the first 18-month pension as a discounted lump sum, which will be enough to capitalize a small business as this bill envisions.

However, Congress should not encourage retirees to go into debt.

Rep. Eduardo Roquero (San Jose del Monte) filed Bill 3286 to increase pensions. I would be the last person on earth to object to an increase in pensions. But, an increase should always be funded by additional contributions. Otherwise, the SSS will simply run out of funds earlier than planned.

The bill also mandates the SSS to set up an optional educational trust fund. Any member who has paid only three months' contribution will qualify to borrow from this fund.

Rep. Roquero does not say where the SSS will get the money to finance his bright ideas.

Sen. Ralph Recto, in his Bill 1362, wants the SSS to increase its exposure in low-cost housing, and in salary, calamity and tuition loans to members.

Low-cost housing and small loans to members are the most disastrous investments in the SSS portfolio. As of the end of 2003, the total investment in low-cost housing was just over P40 billion. At least P30 billion are hopelessly way past due. The small loans were just over P31 billion. It is estimated that at least 80 percent cannot be collected anymore; the SSS can no longer trace most of the borrowers.

The grand total of P71 billion of garbage is a whopping 42 percent of total assets. This is the biggest reason why there is not enough cash flowing at the SSS. Senator Recto wants the SSS to throw good money after bad.

Clearly, all these bills are not backed by technical and actuarial studies. The authors simply want to be able to say that they have the interest of the SSS members at heart. This early, they are already campaigning for their reelection in 2007.

But their hearts are in the wrong place. These lawmakers just want to make a milking cow out of the SSS.

If the authors of these bills would like to make a big play for the grandstands, may I suggest that they jointly file a resolution requesting President Arroyo to put up a fact-finding, not a fault-finding, commission to look into the true financial picture of the SSS. The commission should be composed of the top leaders of the private sector. After all, the employers pay 60 percent of the contributions.

In the meantime, the Philippine Association of Retired Members (PARP) strongly objects to these bills and has submitted its position papers to Rep. Eladio M. Jala, chair of the House committee on government enterprises and privatization, and to Senate ways and means committee chair Sen. Ralph Recto.

If you are an SSS member, active or retired, please join PARP in its fight against these bills. Please write to Rep. Jala and Sen. Recto. These bills should all die ignominiously in the committees.

Gov't taps Maynilad's performance bond

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINE government was finally able to tap last Friday the $120-million performance bond posted by Maynilad Water Services Inc., the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System said.

MWSS finance department head Estelito Polloso said that, after deducting service fees, about $119 million was transferred to the account of Land Bank of the Philippines in Citicorp.

Polloso said that it was Citicorp, the bond's lead arranger, that informed MWSS that the transfer had been completed.

The government was hoping to withdraw the bond last December. However, it was unable to do so because of certain technicalities.

MWSS deputy administrator Macra Cruz said in another interview that the banks, which served as standby letter of credit (SBLC) banks of Maynilad, gave MWSS the runaround in December when it was trying to obtain the $120-million bond.

"They [the banks] informed us that only a US depository bank is authorized to receive the bond to be transferred," Cruz said.

Cruz said the SBLC banks later agreed to the bond transfer to LBP's account in Citicorp.

The $120 million will be used to pay more than P10 billion in accumulated debts of Maynilad to the government, particularly the MWSS.

MWSS concessionaires, Mayniland and Manila Water Corp., were required to post performance bonds. The bonds serve as guarantee funds to cover for the liabilities of the water concessionaires in case they fail to meet their obligations.

Maynilad has been unable to pay its concession fees since March 2001.

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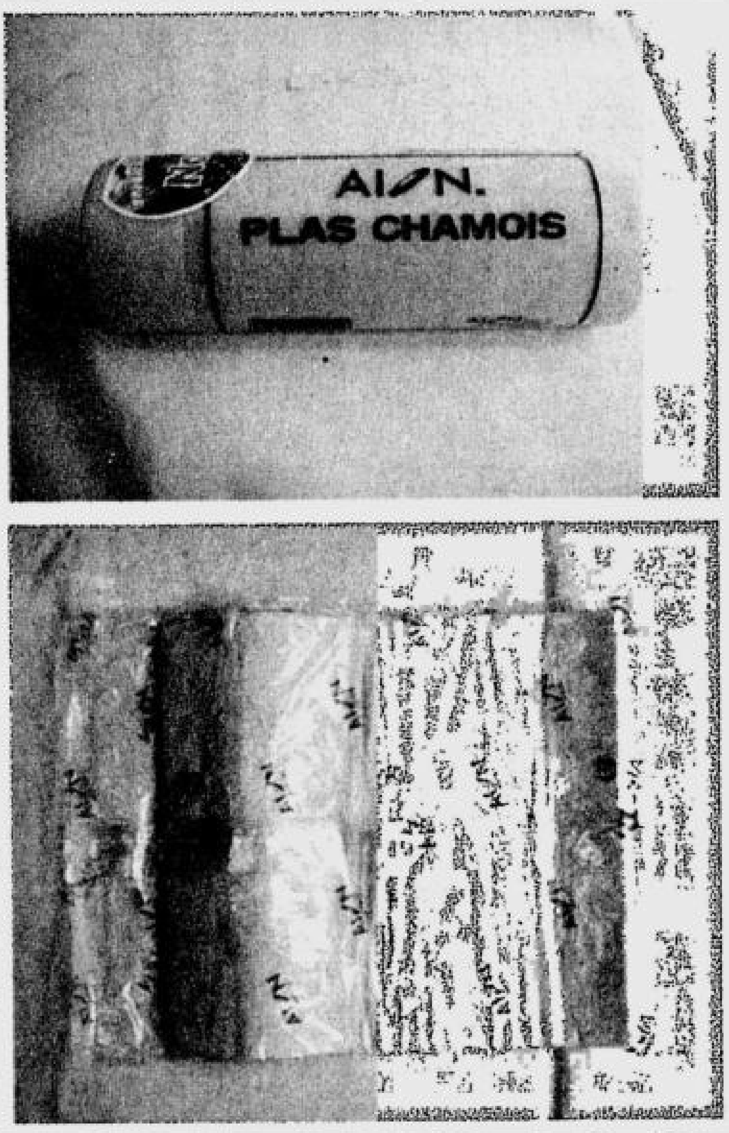

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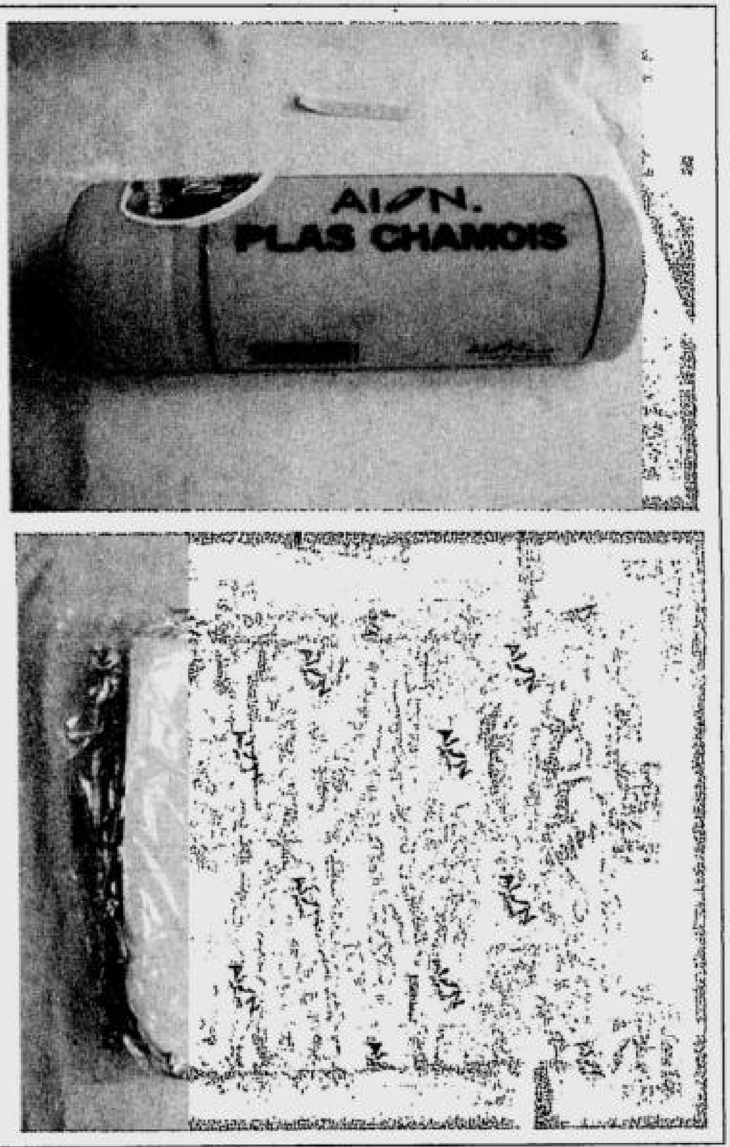

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6. Plastic packaging bears the letters PP & a logo to show that packaging is made of plastic.	6. No similar mark appears on the packaging.
7. The ends of the Chamois are slightly curved.	7. The ends of the Chamois are more curved or rounded.

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E-Mail: ocbocc@philonline.com

Bicol seeks way out of list of top 10 poorest regions

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—At least P87.7 billion worth of major development projects are either ongoing or in the pipeline in the Bicol Region.

And if these major infrastructure projects push through, the region could find its way out of the list of the top 10 poorest regions in the country, according to an official of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Jennelyn Balneg, Neda Bicol assistant regional director, said during a roundtable discussion with PDI Bicol correspondents that Bicol is ranked third among the top 10 poorest regions, a slight improvement from second in previous years.

Balneg attributed Bicol's poor economic standing to the ratings of Masbate and Camarines Norte, which are among the top 10 poorest provinces in the country.

Masbate is ranked the poorest province, while Camarines Norte is 10th on the list.

As much as 62 percent of Masbate's residents, and 52 percent of Camarines Norte, are classified as poor.

The numbers exceed Bicol's average poverty incidence of 46 percent.

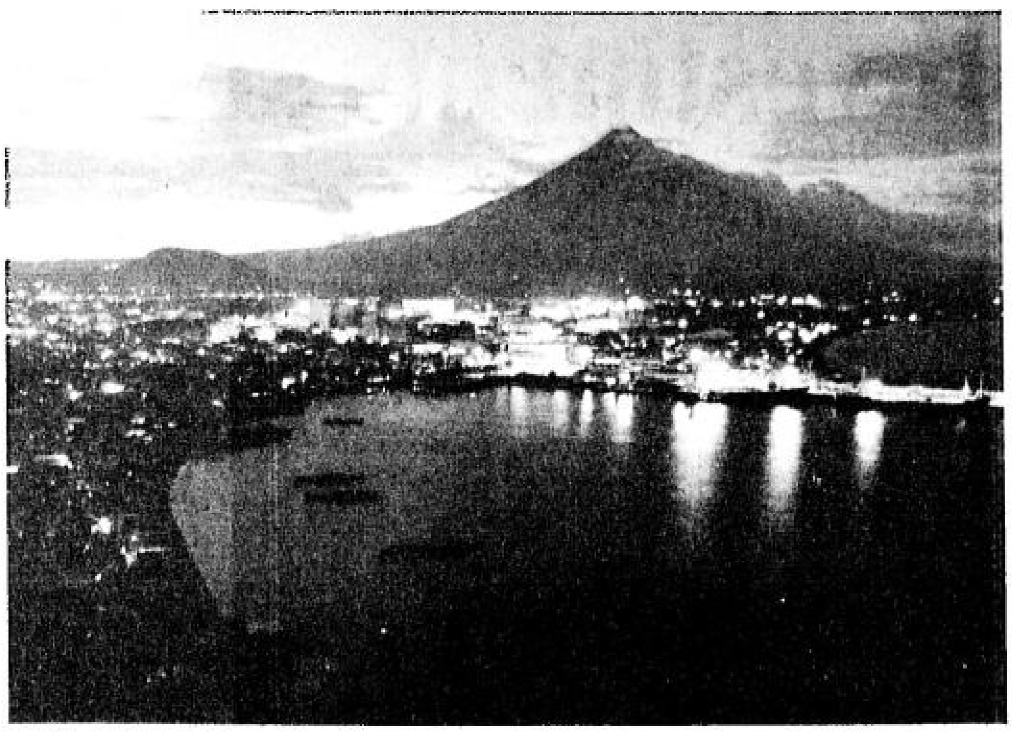
Factors behind the region's poor economic standing include low agricultural productivity and lack of sustainable plans or programs for major social and economic projects.

"Though majority of the provinces in Bicol have been improving their economic status, if two of its provinces have been identified as having below performance-level rates, then surely it has a pulling effect; and that what's happening to Bicol, since Masbate and Camarines Norte have been consistently on the list," Balneg said.

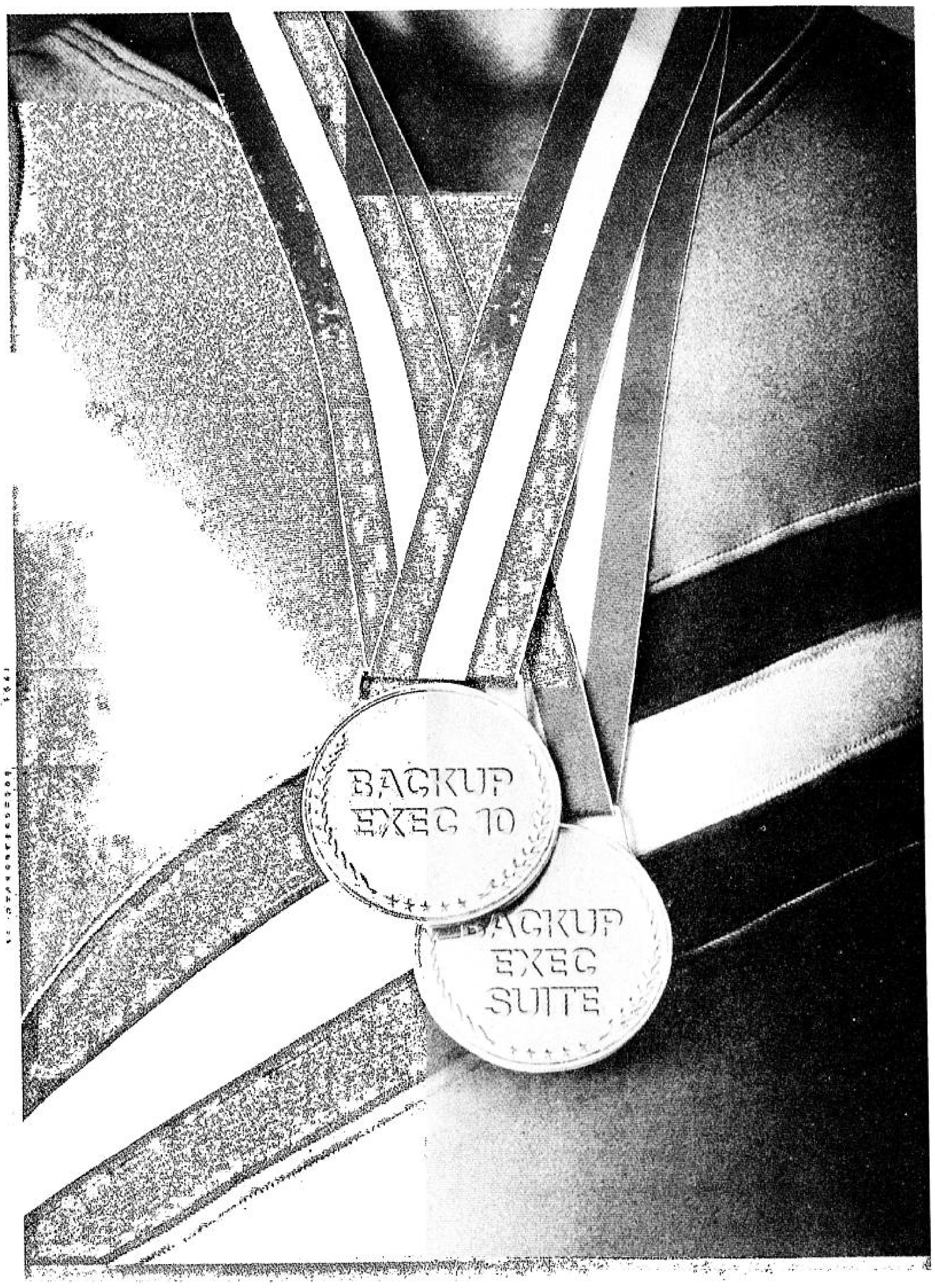
One of the projects that could improve the region's standing is the development of the Legazpi-Iriga-Naga-Daet Growth Corridor.

The corridor was conceived by the

BOHOL/ B9



CLOSE to half of Bicol's population is classified as poor. But with the right projects, the numbers could improve. PDI PHOTO



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Gov't forming revenue performance review body

By Michelle V. Remo

ECONOMIC managers are now laying down the groundwork for the smooth implementation of the recently ratified lateral attrition law, which provides a reward and punishment system for officials and employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the government's economic team was now working on the establishment of the Revenue Performance Evaluation Board, the body that will be tasked to develop performance standards for the BIR and the BOC and to draft the law's implementing rules and regulations.

"We already directed our technical staff to draft and prepare the guidelines. We want the guidelines to be issued as soon as possible now that the law has been ratified," Boncodin said in a telephone interview.

The board will be an inter-agency body to be composed of officials of the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of Finance and National Economic and Development Authority. The board will draft the criteria and mechanics for the granting of incentives, as well as for the imposition of penalty.

The lateral attrition law is expected to improve the government's fiscal health, as it will require the BIR and the BOC to meet revenue collection targets, which the board will set. Employees and officials who surpass their targets will be given monetary incentives, while those who will fail may face dismissal from service.

The law requires that 10 percent of the excess in the collection of the BIR and the BOC be allotted for incentives. It also states that revenue and customs employees and officials who will miss their collection targets by at least 7.5 percent may be terminated. The dismissal, however, will be subject to civil service laws.

The lateral attrition law was passed by the bicameral conference committee of Congress and ratified by President Macapal-Arroyo last week. The law's approval came after ratings firm Standard & Poor's downgraded the Philippines' foreign currency debt rating, and after the BIR reported that it had missed its P476.3-billion revenue collection goal for 2004 by P6 billion.

RENEWABLE ENERGY DATABASE
Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. (center) checks the system provided by IT consulting firm Soluziona Philippines for the development of renewable energy database and information exchange system. The system will be used in the Capacity Building to Remove Barriers to Renewable Energy Development or CBRED project, an advocacy project to promote and establish financial mechanisms that will encourage investors to bring in renewable energy to the country. With Perez are (from left) UNDP deputy resident representative Kyo Naka, CBRED project management office director Francisco A. Benito and Ruben Lambuson, Soluziona managing consultant for utilities and energy.

DOF says gov't to rely more on local borrowings in '05

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance said it would stick to its plan to source the government's 2005 financing requirements from the domestic market to reduce foreign exchange risks.

Finance Undersecretary Eric Recto said the DOF would observe a 60:40 borrowing mix, wherein 60 percent of the government's borrowings for the year would come from domestic sources, while 40 percent would be generated offshore.

The DOF position runs counter to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas recommendation for the government to resort to more foreign borrowings to conserve the country's gross international reserves (GIR).

The Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC), the inter-agency body tasked to set government's economic policies and targets, suggested that the government could go as far as a 50:50 borrowing mix. But according to the DOF, it does not intend to undertake the maximum amount of foreign borrowings.

The GIR, or the country's total foreign currency holdings used to pay foreign debts, stood at $16.029 billion in end-2004. The figure was better than the BSP's target of only $14 billion to $15 billion, but lower than the $16.866 billion recorded in end-2003.

Recto, who is in charge of the government's foreign borrowings, said the government would borrow $4 billion offshore this year, either through bond issues or official development assistance. The $4 billion is equivalent to 40 percent of the government's total financing requirement for the year.

Of the $4 billion, $3 billion will be used to satisfy the national government's own financing needs, while the $1 billion will be set aside for the borrowing requirements of state-owned National Power Corp.

Bicol seeks way out of list . . .

From page B8

RDC V in response to the need for an integrated area-wide development strategy that will address several problems plaguing the region.

The project is estimated to cost P25.9 billion.

Balneg also cited the Bicol River Basin Watershed Management Project, a six-year development project that will balance economic development with natural resources management.

It covers 33 municipalities and three cities, cutting across the provinces of Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur and Albay, with an allotted budget of P2.6 billion.

"Some of the projects are not really for the specific provinces but for Bicol in general," Balneg said.

The RDC V is also pushing for projects like the Luzon-Catanduanes interconnection project, which includes the installation of transmission lines, substation and submarine cable costing P876.6 million; proposed new Legazpi City airport of international standards at Alobo, Daraga, Albay, with a P3.4-billion budget.

The P100.8-million Pantao Port is almost 80 percent complete as of September 2004, and scheduled to be in place by March.

Among major infra projects lined up for this year are the P2.5-billion Tanawon geothermal plant in Sorsogon; Catanduanes circumferential road project, P706.5 million; rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Philippine National Railways mainline south and Sorsogon extension project, P48.9 million; Tiwi Geothermal Power Plant rehabilitation project, more than P100.8 million; Rapu-Rapu Diesel Power Plant with P28.9 million; and Masbate City-Milagros road project, P18 million.

Another project in the pipeline for Masbate province is the San Fernando north road concreting with an estimated project cost of P300 million.

"Aside from the said major infra projects, the RDC and its secretariat, the Neda, are still continuing social development projects such as the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Kalahi) program, the 5th and 6th Country Program for Children, Bicol health services delivery enhancement program, Women's Health Safe Motherhood Project 2, and the Bicol Integrated Development Master Plan," Balneg said.

"There are lots of social, economic and infrastructure development projects in Bicol, and we're hoping that more projects will come, especially in Masbate and Camarines Norte," she added.

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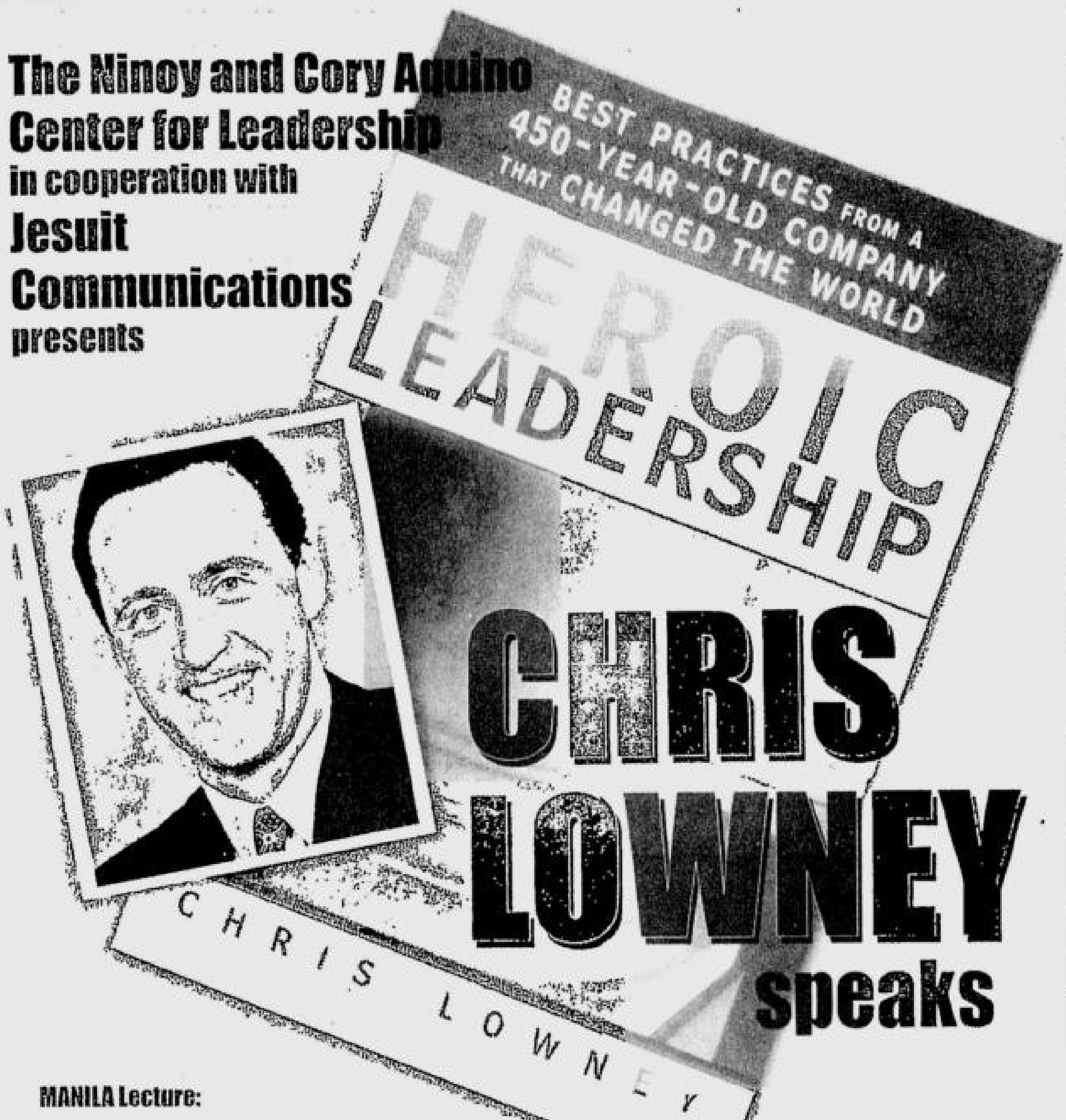
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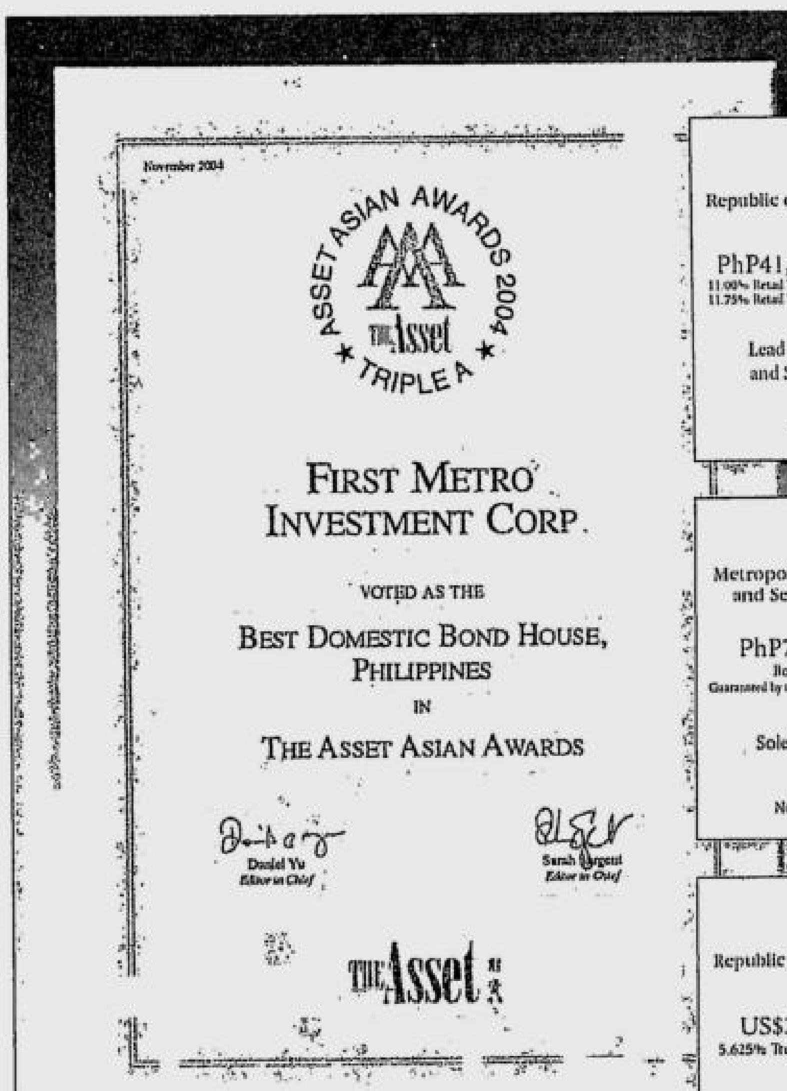
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OFWs vow to remit more funds to RP

By Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—They already brought in $8 billion in remittances last year, but the country's "heroes" are willing to do more to help their beloved Philippines.

About 750 Filipinos working overseas, who were here for the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention, vowed to do their share to alleviate the country's economic woes.

Loida Nicolas-Lewis, chair of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) that organized the convention, said Filipinos working abroad were even willing to deposit $1,000 in the local banks, just to increase the country's foreign reserves.

"That is something that we can do," she told President Macapagal-Arroyo in a speech during the dinner for the delegates at the Cebu Business Park's Lagoon Area Friday night.

If this happens, she said it would mean $8 billion in foreign reserves in the country, from about 8 million Filipinos working abroad.

Lewis is the chair and chief executive officer of TLC Beatrice International Holdings Inc., a food giant based in the US with sales amounting to $2.1 billion in 1995.

Lewis said the roup would also invest in micro financing to help the country's poorest of the poor.

"So only Filipinos abroad who have the extra money can help in micro finance," she said to make the poor self-sufficient in the barrios and in the barangays.

While the overseas Filipinos promised to continue helping the country, Lewis asked President Arroyo to "lead the Philippines" to the path of peace and prosperity.

"Our hope and prayers are with you. Your dreams and vision of the better life for our countrymen are our dreams and vision too," she added.

President Arroyo, in her speech, thanked the overseas Filipinos for their help, but at the same time asked them to continue to be involved in the country's development.

"Let us bring Pinoy Power worldwide and help us at home," she added.

Ms Arroyo said the overseas Filipinos could already help a lot if they deposit their dollar savings in the local banks "because the interest it earns abroad, you also earn here at home where your money is most needed."

The dollar deposits, she added, may not be as big as $1,000, but can still help boost the country's dollar reserves.

The President also asked them to act as a lobby group to protect the country's interest and to increase their monthly remittances even by at least $20.

She also called on them to retire in the Philippines "in a place of your choice and in the company of someone that you love.

Ms Arroyo told the overseas Filipinos that the Philippines is the best place to spend their retirement years because "your peso has more value and health care is both excellent and affordable."

Aside from this, she also asked them to support her 10-point agenda and to continue their assistance to the Donate a Classroom project.

"I'm calling on all Filipinos to stay the course," the President said. "It's time to tear down barriers and build up hope and optimism at the start of the new year."

The 3rd Global Network, which opened on Thursday and ended yesterday, was participated in by about 750 representatives of Filipino associations in Canada, US, Denmark, United Kingdom, Australia, among others.

The convention carried a theme "Pinoy Power Worldwide" with the aim to encourage Filipino overseas to participate actively in steering the Philippine economy toward recovery.

NaFFAA founding chair Alex Esclamado said the leaders of the 12,000 Filipino associations abroad planned to form an umbrella organization to promote and protect the interest of Filipinos abroad.

The umbrella group, he added, would also help promote the amelioration of poverty in the Philippines by making sure that at least 20 percent of the money they sent to their relatives would be invested in small businesses.

Esclamado, a businessman and founder of US-based Philippine News, pointed out that they would threaten their relatives that money would stop flowing from abroad if all the money they sent would just be spent and not invested.

"Something must be left to grow," he added.

Esclamado said they also planned to ask each of the 12,000 Filipino associations abroad to commit and raise some $50,000, which will be invested to the regions where their members belong.

The money, he added, could be channeled through the umbrella organization, which would be called Global Confederation of Filipino Associations.

The organization could also shape the country's political future as the members would soon vote as a bloc, said Esclamado.

"In our number resides our powerful strength. This country needs a middle-class that is intelligent enough not to be bought," he added.

Esclamado said they could also tell their relatives not to sell their votes or else the remittances stopped.

Asked when the organization would be formed, he said it would be before the 2007 elections.

Gov't cuts '05 deficit target to ₱177B

From page B1

revenue collection will also help achieve a possibly better fiscal standing this year.

Outgoing Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said the new 2005 deficit target already took into account the P15-billion additional revenue from the law raising taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, which was enacted last month, and the increase in fees and charges by several government agencies.

She also said the government was poised to collect a substantial amount, although she could not specify a figure, from the implementation of EO 399, which President Macapagal-Arroyo signed this month. The EO exempts from tax audit taxpayers who will voluntarily raise by 25 percent the remittances of their 2004 liabilities from that of their previous year's tax payments.

The new deficit target for 2005 also considers the P18 billion worth of obligations of state-owned National Power Corp. that the national government will assume this year. The government decided to assume P200 billion worth of Napocor debts, but the debt absorption will be gradual, and that only P18.8 billion, which represents maturing interest payments, will be absorbed this year.

Amatong said that despite the absorption of Napocor debts, the 2005 deficit would still be lower than the original target of P184.5 billion because the additional revenue would more than compensate for it.

AGAINS
CHILD

CHILDREN make a peace sign during the recent 7th
The marchers are seeking the passage of more laws p
the Philippines.

BSP agrees to accredi

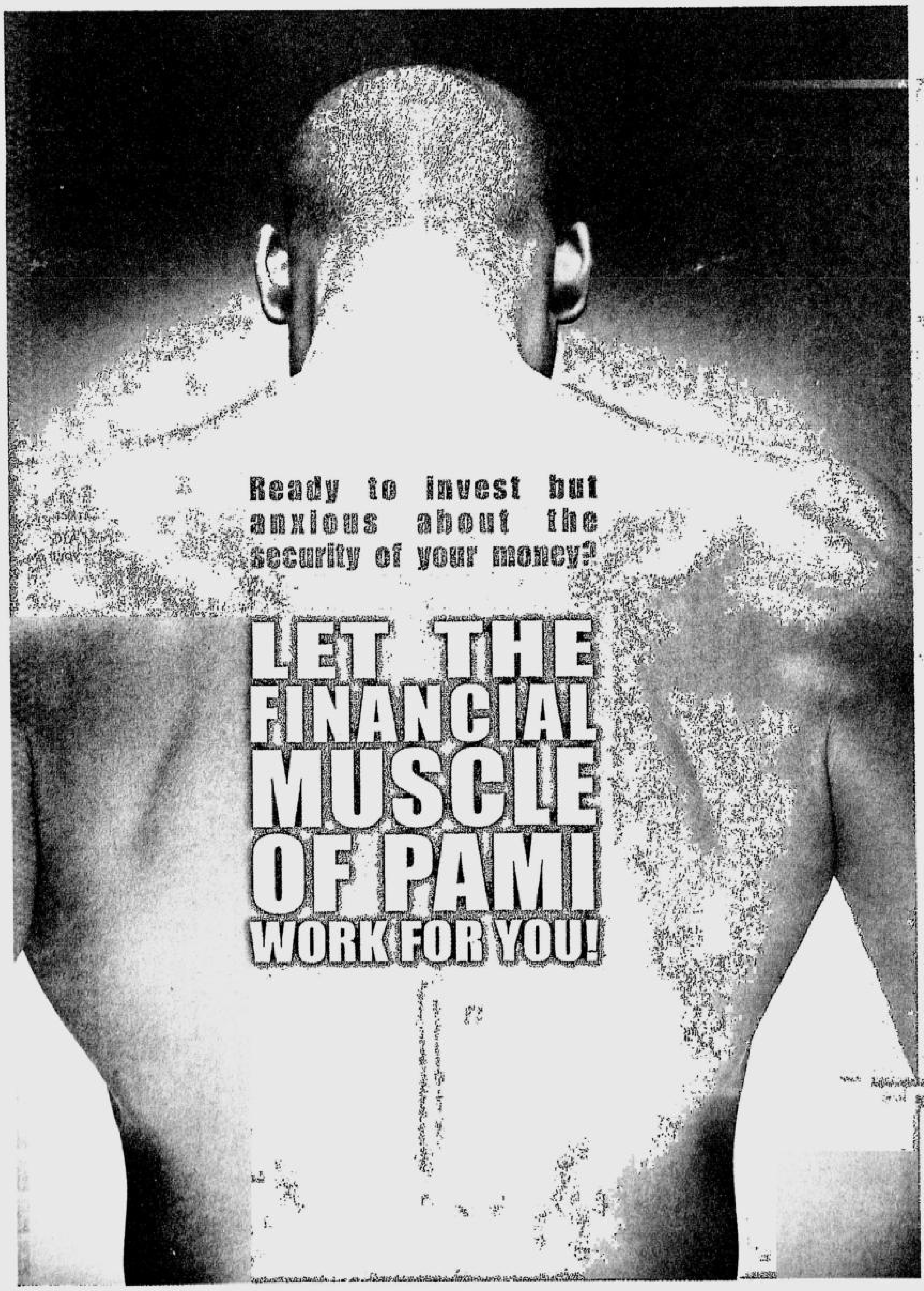
By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has agreed to accredit, for bank supervisory purposes, internationally accepted credit-rating agencies that have a representative office in the country.

The BSP announced on Friday that its policy-making Monetary Board had agreed last week to recognize global credit-rating agencies that would undertake local or national ratings for the risk weighting of new financial instruments tapped by the banking system.

"In addition to providing yet another step toward the deepening of the Philippine capital market, the opening of the domestic credit-rating market to international players is also expected to upgrade the rating standards in the country as well as provide both investors and regulators with credible alternative source of credit rating," the BSP said.

US-based Standard & Poor's, for instance, has a local operating affiliate Philippine Rating Ser-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t rating agencies

ces (Philratings).

Having a representative office was the minimum quirement set by the Monetary Board for the ac editation.

In September 2003, the BSP issued Circular 404 response to the introduction in the financial mar t of products that create increasing demand for d reliance on credit-rating agencies by industry ayers and regulators.

To ensure that reliance on these credit-rating encies is not misplaced, the BSP laid down the idelines for its recognition and de-recognition of idelines, only rating issued by rating agencies cognized by the BSP shall be considered for bank pervisory purposes.

The services of credit-rating agencies, for in ance, are required in determining risk weights in certaining compliance with existing rules and gulations on risk-based capital requirements.

So far, only Philratings has been accredited by e BSP for bank supervisory purposes.

HEDGING TOOL

Banks revive trading of FX options

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE LOCAL banking community is set to revive, starting today, the trading of foreign exchange (FX) options in order to widen the array of hedging tools.

The Bankers Association of the Philippines, in coordination with ACI Philippines, the country's association of forex traders, recently released the guidelines for FX options on US dollar against the peso for banks with expanded derivatives licenses.

ACI president Jose Emmanuel Hilado said the revival of the local FX options market would complement the thrust of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to deepen the local financial market. He noted that forex options were considered important financial instruments in major financial centers abroad like New York, Tokyo, Singapore and London.

FX option is an agreement between two parties that entitles the holder of the contract the right to buy (call option) or sell (put option) foreign exchange at a specified price from/to the issuer of the contract within a particular period of time.

The holder of the contract has the right to exercise what is stipulated in the option contract but is not obligated to do so. The issuer of the contract, on the other hand, is obliged to honor the contract once the holder of the option exercises his right. In FX options, what is being bought or sold is the right to buy or sell foreign exchange at a pre-determined price within a specific time frame.

"With the launch of the interbank market, local clients will now have an alternative hedging tool. Currently, hedging of forex obligations are done through the use of FX forward contracts," Hilado said.

Preparatory to the re-launch of the inter-bank FX option market, the BSP released Circular 445 last August 2004 which provided the guidelines for the recognition of positions arising from FX options. Trading of FX options will thus follow existing regulations on the sale of foreign exchange.

Trading of FX options will initially be limited to banks with expanded derivatives licenses. Banks without expanded licenses can, however, execute FX options for their clients by hedging with banks with the appropriate licenses.

Hilado explained that FX options could be used as an alternative protection mechanism against adverse movements in foreign exchange. FX options, as compared to forward contracts, give the holder flexibility since there is no obligation to buy or sell.

Forward contracts, on the other hand, require the holder to buy or sell the FX while FX options give the holder the right but not the obligation to buy or sell the FX. The cost of buying an option is called a premium.

"FX options limit the cost of hedging to the amount of premium paid. For example, if a client is hedging against a depreciation of the peso against the dollar by buying a call option (at a specified strike price), the client may exercise the right to buy if the peso has depreciated," Hilado said.

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AIG is the leading US-based international insurance and financial services organization and the largest underwriter of commercial and industrial insurance in the US. In 2003, it registered $678.3 billion in assets and $ 9.3 billion in income.

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MORE MOVEMENT AHEAD

US Fed hints will stick to diet of small rate hikes

SAN FRANCISCO—More US interest rate increases lie ahead, but they would likely not need to be at a faster pace because inflation is contained, Federal Reserve officials said on Friday.

A recent uptick in inflation—partly the result of high energy costs—should moderate, allowing for gradual rate increases, Fed Gov. Susan Bies said.

There is still "quite a bit of slack" in the US economy, which has "room to run," she said.

Bies said hikes could continue to be measured, the Fed's term for its program of small rate increases that has produced five one-quarter percentage point moves since June.

Some have guessed that the Federal Open Market Committee might replace the "measured" term at its next meeting Feb. 1-2 in favor of language that refers to being responsive to data.

But a report in BusinessWeek published on Friday cited "associates" of Fed chair Alan Greenspan as saying the Fed chief was happy to keep raising rates at a steady pace.

Separately, Jeffrey Lacker, president of the Richmond Fed, said the FOMC would be able to inoculate the US economy from inflation fired up by a cheaper US dollar.

Policy-makers are "capable of keeping inflation and inflation expectations steady," even though a falling dollar makes imports more expensive, he said in a speech in Richmond.

Minneapolis Fed President Gary Stern said in Marquette, Michigan, that he was not surprised that the weaker US dollar—down roughly 30 percent against major currencies in the past three years—has not helped the country's trade balance.

Rising American incomes have boosted demand for imports even as prices may have risen due to the softer dollar, Stern told a business group.

While strong US growth has increased demand for imported goods, Bies said Europe and Japan need to grow more quickly to help fix the US current account gap.

"Fundamental issues" are hindering overseas growth, she told reporters after speaking to the Charlotte, North Carolina, Economics Club.

US fixed income markets expect the FOMC to raise official interest rates at its meetings in February, March and May.

But yields on longer maturity Treasury bonds, which reflect expectations on inflation down the line, have fallen recently.

Stern said this flattening of the yield curve, or the difference between short and long-term rates, showed inflation expectations are well-anchored.

The Fed's trendsetting federal funds rate is now at 2.25 percent, a level the Fed characterizes as "accommodative" in the sense that it represents cheap borrowing costs by historical standards.

"Real short-term interest rates can't stay where they are now," Lacker said.

The Fed's plan is to move the rate back to a "neutral" level—a movable goal that private-sector economists reckon may be near 4 percent.

Bies and Lacker, like San Francisco Fed president Janet Yellen on Thursday, distanced themselves from comments in the December FOMC meeting minutes about possible excessive risk-taking in financial markets brought on by the long period of low interest rates.

The minutes said "some" policy-makers held those concerns, leading the markets to worry that the Fed as a group was leaning toward faster rate increases.

"I don't see any reason why one would expect more excessive risk-taking with lower real interest rates," Lacker said.

Instead, he said the United States should deal with a "less than ideal" federal budget outlook.

He referred to the approaching wave of "baby boom" Americans who will be retiring in the next decade and suggested that preparing for their pension demands was more difficult amid current conditions of record deficits.

Reuters

Crude prices jump above $48

VIENNA, Austria — Oil futures jumped more than a dollar to above $48 per barrel on Friday as Opec forecast increased demand for its crude in the first half of the year.

Analysts said prices also were being supported by anxieties over elections in Iraq on Jan. 30 and the meeting on the same day of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec).

Light, sweet crude for March delivery rose $1.22 cents to settle at $48.53 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Crude futures are well below the October peak above $55 a barrel, but prices are about 40 percent higher than a year ago due to strong global demand, temporary output snags and fears that geopolitical strife could further threaten supplies.

John Kilduff, senior energy analyst at Fimat USA in New York, said it is possible that oil prices will soon break through the $50 a barrel level again, though it would probably require some really cold weather to drive up home heating demand or a significant worsening of the security situation in Iraq.

"It's going to be difficult to break above $50 or break below $40," Kilduff said. The last time Nymex oil futures settled below $40 a barrel was July 13. The last time they settled above $50 was on Nov. 3.

Brent crude rose $1.21 to settle at $45.73 a barrel on London's International Petroleum Exchange.

Opec, citing supply problems from non-Opec countries and continued strength from China's economy, on Friday forecast demand from member countries for the first quarter at 28.56 million barrels a day—up by 390,000 barrels—and 27.68 million barrels a day for the second quarter, an increase of 540,000 barrels.

Prices had been pushed lower in previous days by expected milder temperatures in North America, the key market for heating oil, and increases in supplies for the US market.

The US Department of Energy reported Wednesday that the nation's inventory of crude oil rose by 3.4 million barrels last week to 292.2 million barrels, about 8 percent above year-ago levels.

The US supply of distillate fuel, which includes heating oil, diesel and jet fuel, rose by 800,000 barrels to 123.8 million barrels, or 5 percent below year-ago levels.

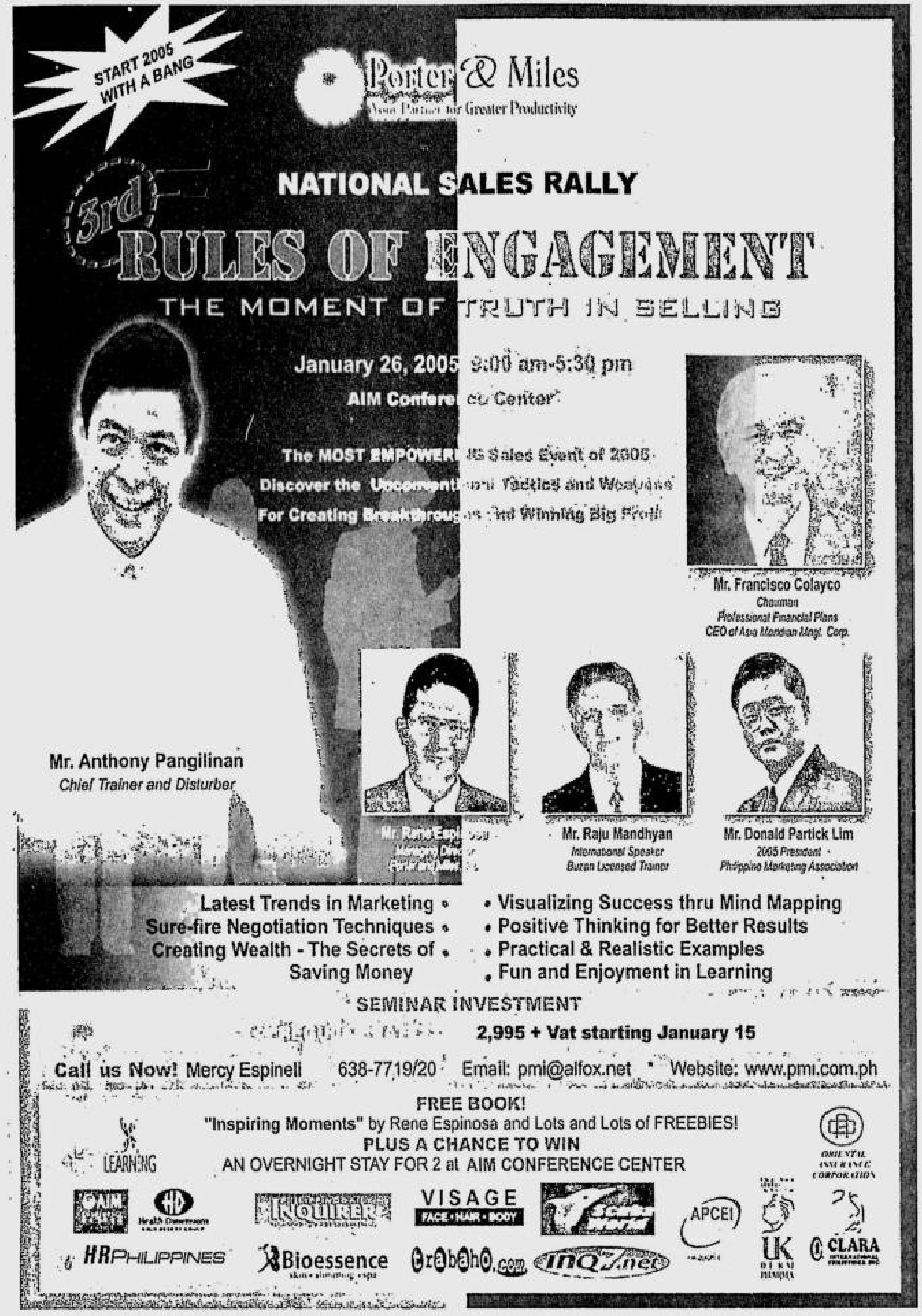
Oil prices briefly pushed to their highest point in seven weeks Tuesday, hitting $49.50 per barrel in intra-day trading on the Nymex, after the International Energy Agency raised its estimate for expected daily demand for crude in 2005 by 100,000 barrels a day to 1.4 million barrels.

Traders said there would be an increasing focus on likely developments at the Opec meeting. The group agreed in December to trim production by 1 million barrels a day starting this month to bring output closer to its self-imposed target of 27 million barrels a day.

AP

A CHINESE mother and child beg in front of a fashion billboard in Shanghai. Living standards for China's 1.3 billion people have risen sharply after more than two decades of economic reforms that have boosted private business and capitalist-style investment. But tens of millions of people are still mired in poverty, and Beijing has been concerned that a widening wealth gap could undermine social stability.

REUTERS



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CONGRESS SHOULD NOT PROLONG THE DEBATES ON AN ISSUE THAT WILL NEVER BE ANSWERED TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL. THE PROBLEM MUST BE ADDRESSED FAST, AND THE BURDEN OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM SHARED BY ALL.

WE APPEAL TO ALL FILIPINOS TO EXERCISE FORTITUDE, RESILIENCE AND TRUE PATRIOTISM, AS WE ALL SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO RESOLVE OUR FISCAL PROBLEMS.

PMAP 1956 Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP)

ADVT

EU offers trade relief for tsunami-hit nations

BRUSSELS—The European Union agreed Friday to accelerate trade help for Asian countries hit by the devastating tsunami, in particular Sri Lanka, officials said.

Senior bureaucrats from EU trade ministries agreed to bring forward a new "Generalized System of Preferences" (GSP) for the countries concerned in advance of the scheme's planned introduction in July.

We're aiming now for it to enter into force on April 1," said Claude Veron-Reville, spokeswoman for EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson.

"We can go ahead with a proposal to anticipate a reform that improves and enlarges the benefits of the GSP, in particular for the countries affected by the tsunami," she said.

The EU system grants products imported from GSP beneficiary countries either duty-free access or a tariff reduction.

Of the countries hit by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tidal wave, Sri Lanka would benefit the most from the reformed GSP by seeing EU customs duties on its textiles and clothing exports reduced to zero.

Thailand would benefit from a reduction from 12 percent to 4.2 percent on its lucrative shrimp exports to Europe.

India and Indonesia would gain from better terms on their textile exports.

The EU may also, on a "case by case basis," suspend anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties against companies in the affected countries, diplomats said.

The death toll across the Indian Ocean from the disaster is now close to 222,000, with Indonesia suffering by far the most fatalities. *AFP*

Stocks to weather earnings, oil

NEW YORK—Stock investors may want to fasten their seatbelts this week, when a flurry of earnings and economic data will once again be in focus.

Concerns over the Iraq elections and the outcome of the next meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or Opec, both scheduled for next Sunday, Jan. 30, also could affect investor sentiment during the week.

On the earnings front, there's little evidence to build a case for optimism.

Of the first 117 companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 to report earnings, more have missed expectations on earnings and revenue than at the same time last year, according to Reuters Estimates.

And in the stock market, investors voted their dismay by being quick to sell after getting the earnings news.

For the year to date, the blue-chip Dow Jones industrial average is down 3.62 percent, the broader S&P 500 is off 3.63 percent, and the tech-heavy Nasdaq is down 6.49 percent.

"I think [this] week is going to be very volatile," said David Scott, portfolio manager at the Chase Growth Fund, which has assets of more than $200 million, mostly in large-cap companies.

The earnings season gets into top gear with dozens of the biggest US companies scheduled to report.

Those will include Johnson & Johnson, Merck & Co. Inc. and Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc. on Tuesday, Starbucks Corp. on Wednesday, Microsoft Corp. and Caterpillar Inc. on Thursday, and McDonald's Corp. on Friday.

On the week's calendar of economic data, the consumer confidence index for January from the Conference Board on Tuesday, durable goods data for December on Thursday, and fourth-quarter gross domestic product numbers on Friday will be closely watched.

Anthony Chan, managing director and senior economist at JPMorgan Fleming Asset Management, believes that corporate earnings will end the season slightly improved.

Chan cautioned, however, that "the climate in Iraq and the climate with Opec will determine how we view those earnings—those factors will influence the equity market's sentiment."

Any escalation in violence leading up to the scheduled Iraq elections on Jan. 30 could have an impact on US financial markets, analysts said.

"In the shorter term, you are going to have volatility in the energy markets and the currency markets due to the Iraqi elections—you can see that concern building up," said Frank Holmes, chief investment officer at US Global Investors Inc., which manages about $1.7 billion of assets.

Opec, the oil producers' cartel that controls about 40 percent of global exports, meets on Jan. 30 to discuss whether it needs to cut supplies further ahead of the second quarter, when winter demand slows.

Investors worry about the possibility of higher energy prices because they can squeeze corporate profits and curb the consumer spending that drives the US economy.

Also on investors' minds is the next meeting of the US Federal Reserve's policy-setting body, the Federal Open Market Committee, on Feb. 1-2. *Reuters*

TRADERS celebrating on the floor of the Brazilian Mercantile and Futures Exchange in Sao Paulo, on the final trading day of the year 2004. Long seen as the eternal country of the future, Brazil may have finally arrived. An invitation by Britain to Brazil to take part in a meeting of the G7 economic powers puts the Latin American country firmly in a select group of emerging powers to watch. REUTERS

McDonald's views China as fastest growing area outside United States

HONG KONG—McDonald's Corp. said on Friday it views China as its fastest developing area after the United States over the next couple of years, thanks to a booming economy and growing consumption patterns.

The world's largest fast-food chain, which serves burgers, spicy chicken wings and is testing rice triangle wraps in some mainland outlets, said it aims to have 1,000 stores throughout China by 2008, up from 640 currently.

"China had a very good year in 2004. Early on we concentrated on large cities. Today, it's just throughout the country," said Marvin Whaley, president of McDonald's in Asia, Middle East and Africa.

China is among the world's fastest growing economies, with massive urbanization and growing incomes spawning increasingly westernized consumption habits in a country where rice has been the main diet for centuries.

Competition is rife among Western fast-food chains, with Yum Brands Inc., the parent of Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut, testing a Chinese fast-food concept for China.

Yum, which has more than 1,200 KFC outlets in China where chicken is more popular than beef, is also testing a casual dining version of its Taco Bell chain in China.

Whaley said McDonald's planned to open 200 stores per year for the next two years. The restaurant chain, best known for American style burgers and french fries, runs 30,000 restaurants throughout the world.

Whaley said McDonald's would start "to look" at the use of a franchise operating model in China. Right now only one McDonald's restaurant is run by franchise in China, with others run under a joint venture business model.

He did not provide sales figures. *Reuters*

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Track A **Ballroom B** Education Solution Sets

Learn how your school can save money on certain Licensing Programs and for some software products, learn how these products can be integrated in the school's curriculum.

Who should attend:
School Administrators, Deans, Purchasing Managers

8:00 - 8:30	Registration	
8:30 - 9:15	**Macromedia Studio MX 2004.** The Professional Tool for Designing and Developing Internet Solutions	☐
9:15 - 10:00	**Adobe Photoshop** and **Adobe Indesign** for Students to Have Deeper Understanding and Appreciation of Typography	☐
10:00 - 10:30	A.M. Break	
10:30 - 11:15	**Autodesk** in Education, Session I	☐
11:15 - 12:00	**Macromedia Breeze** Solutions that Provide Rich Web Communication System	☐
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch Break	
1:00 - 1:45	**Symantec's** Threat Prevention Solutions	☐
1:45 - 2:30	**Autodesk** Education Solution Sets	
2:30 - 3:15	**Consultation Sessions***	☐
3:15 - 3:45	P.M. Break	
3:45 - 4:30	**Consultation Sessions*** * One on one sessions with technology specialists or product managers to address inquiries regarding your school's specific requirements. These sessions are for both education solution sets and technology updates seminars	☐

Track B **Ballroom C** Technology Update

Learn the latest trends in IT and get a brief product overview. Consultation Sessions for specific requirements regarding products presented will be from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ballroom B

Who should attend:
School IT Managers, faculty members.

8:00 - 8:30	Registration	
8:30 - 9:15	**McAfee:** Protection You Can Trust	☐
9:15 - 10:00	Use Internet-Based Academic Resources Without Fear with **CA's eTrust** Solutions	☐
10:00 - 10:30	A.M. Break	
10:30 - 11:15	**Symantec's** Threat Prevention Technology for the Education Enterprise.	☐
11:15 - 12:00	Extending the Life of Educational Technology with **Citrix** Solutions	☐
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch Break	
1:00 - 1:45	Recover Your Data From a Disaster Efficiently and Effectively with **CA's BrightStor ARCserve Backup**	☐
1:45 - 2:30	**Business Objects** Reporting Tools for Schools	☐
2:30 - 3:15	**IBM** - DB2 "DB2 Express: Feature for Feature, the Most Inexpensive Database Today."	☐
3:15 - 3:45	P.M. Break	
3:45 - 4:30	**Borland** New Vision - Software Delivery Optimization and Overall Borland ALM	☐
4:30 - 5:00	**Open**	

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Thai agri-business model enables poorest farmer to earn from export

MAPping THE FUTURE

Augusto L. de Leon

THE CONCEPT of agribusiness was introduced in the Philippines several years ahead of its adoption in Thailand. In the Philippines, it worked very well in the livestock feeds industry. Traditional plantation agriculture in Mindanao also adopted a more integrated agribusiness system.

Following the success of the livestock agribusiness model in the Philippines, CP of Thailand replicated and executed the system in much larger scale, not only in Thailand but also in the region, including Southeast Asia and China.

While the Philippines stuck to the original Harvard model, Thailand took the concept further to enable the farmers working the soil to become part of the system.

To do so, Thai agricultural policy was directed toward government taking a role in behalf of the farmers, so the latter are able to integrate into the private sector agribusiness system, especially those who were active in the export business.

In a nutshell, what the Thai government did was organize the farmers and provide support mechanisms, so that farmers can produce agricultural products that the private sector will buy to supply their export market.

Traders and exporters were provided with financing and encouraged to make investments in the processing of agricultural products—a win-win policy for the financial institution, as this group of businessmen were lower risk borrowers.

It was also a win-win situation to the agricultural sector, because the farmers were assured of markets for volume production at profitable prices to the farmers.

The main incentive to the exporter was stability and growth potential of supply on one end, and control over product quality on the other.

A very interesting example is the Thai export of Jasmine rice to the United States.

In 1997, a rice trader in Thailand added a small quantity of Jasmine rice to his export of regular rice to the US.

A premium pricing differential was quickly established in the retail market. Demand was strong, supply limited. Instead of raising prices, the trader figured that he can make more money if he increased supply and ensured quality standards to meet the consumers' requirement for quality in the US market.

Working with the government, the Ministry of Agriculture identified the best land areas of Thailand where the Jasmine rice variety could be best produced. These included the northern Chang Mai region.

After identifying the specific farms, farmers were encouraged to plant Jasmine rice, instead of the variety they traditionally planted. Good planting seeds were provided, farmers educated by conducting seminars on best farming practices for the Jasmine variety.

Meanwhile, the trader was able to secure the financing to build a modern rice mill to process Jasmine rice and re-process Jasmine rice milled by other rice mills.

Jasmine palay is more expensive than ordinary rice so the farmers are able to share in the profits of premium pricing in the export market.

The Jasmine rice agribusiness system was in place in just two years, such that in five years, this enterprise is already the largest Jasmine rice exporter to the US. He is now moving to capture the EU market.

Building on success, the government started to look at what could be done for the farmers whose farm land is not suitable for planting Jasmine rice. A new rice variety was developed named Phatum.

We tested the new variety and found it unacceptable to consumers because the leftover becomes hard the next morning even when reheated. Their scientists went to work to solve the problem, and a trial shipment of Phatum No. 3 will be produced.

This variety will be positioned as a regular, not premium, rice, further enabling Thailand to reach a larger market segment.

Having been profitable over the years, this entrepreneur built a fruit processing plant in the northern area. Again replicating the agribusiness system for another agricultural product, he is canning fruit cocktail using available fruits in the area.

The volume of available fruits, however, is unable to support the cannery so government agri people are once more organizing the farmers to plant sweet corn to supply the raw materials for the factory.

As exports of Jasmine rice, Phatum rice, canned fruits, canned sweet corn increase, small farmers increase their production and income. They have become participants and beneficiaries of the global trade.

Moving from traditional to modern has to do with specialization. What the Thai agricultural policy has done was to organize and make their farmers efficient producers of agricultural products.

They did not make the processors farmers nor the farmers processors. Instead, agricultural policy was honed to make the farmers better producers, and to provide businessmen with the capital and raw materials to undertake the value added opportunities in processing and marketing of the farm products.

Wealth is created at the farm level, at the processing level and at the marketing level. The economy of Thailand benefits from the foreign exchange agri products generate.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is principal consultant of De Leon Consulting. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

CHOWKING wants its food to taste the same anytime, anywhere.

Create uniformity by putting cooks on the same page

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

IT IS the usual complaint of many customers.

One day, the food is just perfect, inspiring them to go back for more. But on the next visit, meals are too oily, taste too salty and the serving size is but a shadow of its old self.

Chowking Food Corp., the country's largest fast-food chain serving Chinese food with close to 300 branches nationwide, had its share of complaints.

Management, thus, put on its thinking cap and realized a major factor affecting quality was the lack of training among the chefs.

Chowking president Rafael dela Rosa tells Business Monday that unlike other fast-food restaurants, Chowking cooks its meals, such as pansit and rice toppings, right in the kitchen of the individual stores, and not in a commissary.

This presents a unique challenge for Chowking to standardize the quality of the food, since one chef may cook the food differently from the guy who will take over his shift. And there are about seven cooks per store, each with his own way of doing things.

To solve the problem, Chowking institutionalized a certification program four years ago that all the chefs must go through, in an attempt to put all the chefs on the same recipe page.

In this way, pansit in one branch will taste the same as that served in another.

It also solves the problem of making the new dishes in the stores taste the same as the food prepared in the R&D kitchens of Chowking.

Dela Rosa says there had been instances when the cooks could not execute the recipes in the stores, the way the head cooks prepared it in the main kitchen, which was also attributed to the lack of training.

With the certification program, the current cooks go through a one- to three-month training program under the supervision of Chowking's research and development unit.

They learn everything, from how much soy sauce or salt to put in the dishes, to the preparation of the many items on the menu.

They learn on-site and they have a "recital" at the end of the program, where they present their cooked dishes to the supervisors, before they finally get certified.

"It becomes a competitive advantage for them because they can bring the skills they learn here everywhere they go. And they are proud to be known as gold certified cooks," Dela Rosa says.

Chowking has so far graduated 2,500 cooks.

He adds Chowking also hired the cooks as regular employees, as it will be hard for employees to provide service that the company wants, if they are hired on a contractual basis and changed every six months.

"That will defeat the purpose of the training program," he says.

Dela Rosa adds the training program was also put in place in preparation for the setting up of the next 200 stores.

For the new hires, Dela Rosa says they have to go through a three- to six-month training program as apprentice cook, where they learn the proper way of chopping meat and vegetables, among others, under the supervision of the cooks in the kitchen.

Apprentice cooks that show potential will then go through the one- to three-month cooking training in preparation for their promotion into cooks.

"Most of the cooks we hire are high school graduates and they are eager to show that they can acquire new skills. It is more than just the salary," Dela Rosa says.

Dela Rosa says the cooks certification program is part of a whole package of training programs aimed at improving the capabilities of the staff.

Starting last year, Chowking kicked off a similar certification program for the cashiers and the service crew.

"We want to recognize performance. We have already addressed with the consistency of the food with the cooks, now it is time to address the consistency of the service," he says.

He gave up guns and a uniform for numbers and ledgers

CARPIO

HAD his sister not prevailed upon him to take up accounting (as the reference accounting books she previously used were then available as hand-me-downs), Punongbayan & Araullo (P&A) audit and assurance partner Jessie Carpio would probably be holding office in Camp Aguinaldo now rather than in one of the high-rises in Makati City.

The certified public accountant had dreams of joining the Philippine Military Academy and eventually rising to the rank of general. Twenty-five years after deciding to trade Army gear for computers, Carpio has no regrets as he continues to make waves in his own not-so-little niche.

Carpio joined P&A in 1988, the same year it was founded, which proved to be an opportune time for the young talent. "P&A had just been established and the founders were in need of middle supervisors," says Carpio, who had then been in public practice for about five years. "I thought that by joining P&A, I could be a big cog in a smaller machine."

Indeed, that same year, Carpio was chosen to be one of four P&A seniors sent overseas for an 18-month-long residency program. Carpio was assigned to the Chicago office of P&A's then international affiliate, where he worked on several engagements including that of fast-food giant McDonald's. "It was my first trip out of the country, and I didn't really know what to expect," recalls Carpio. "But now I can say that it was an experience that opened my mind, broadened my perspective, and heightened my appreciation and understanding of other cultures."

Because of his experience in the Philippine market, which is heavily reliant on entrepreneurs, Carpio was assigned to the entrepreneurial services group during his residency in the US and was able to handle audit work for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs).

"When working with an SME, you get an overall view of the company. You audit all the financial statement accounts, from cash receivables and inventories to equity. It's not like when you audit a big company, where you may be in charge of only one account of that company's financials," explains Carpio.

"Besides, when you audit SMEs, you get to meet and discuss issues and exchange ideas with the owners or entrepreneurs themselves. This approach provides auditors like myself with a comprehensive view of the inner workings of an SME."

Upon his return to Manila, Carpio resumed managing and leading engagements involving businesses in all shapes and sizes—from small, family-owned enterprises to publicly listed corporate giants. For the past several years, Carpio's experience in auditing SMEs helped him in closely working with an international organization of entrepreneurs where he advises the business owners on matters involving internal controls, accounting and taxes.

Carpio, a cum laude graduate of the University of the East, supplemented his residency experience with a Master in Management degree from the Asian Institute of Management, which he attended as a P&A scholar.

"I'm very lucky that P&A continues to give me several opportunities to work with diverse groups of people and businesses and to grow personally and professionally," shares Carpio. And although the "smaller machine" that he first became a part of is now one of the largest auditing firms in the country, Carpio has stayed true to his original intent: as head of one of the firm's two audit groups and the resident specialist on SMEs, Carpio is now not only a cog in the machinery, but a part of the very backbone of the practice.

Tax sent wrong smoke signals

From page B15

cigarettes were taxed 10 percent of the pack's price. So when prices rose, taxes also increased in proportion. That's called the "ad valorem" tax.

If a tobacco manufacturer wanted to pay less taxes, he would prefer a tax by volume or, a "specific" tax, say, P10 per pack. The tax would not rise with inflation.

Taxes from the "sin products" have been dropping over the past years because they were not adjusted to inflation. They were taxed on the basis of volume, rather than on value. That is, the former tax system put cigarettes into four price categories, each with a corresponding tax rate. Packs fell under the classes of premium, high priced, medium priced, and low priced.

Further, that 4-tier system allowed manufacturers to evade lots of taxes by getting their cigarettes classified under the lower categories.

A better alternative would be the ad valorem tax, the tax based on value. A flat rate would be charged on the price of the cigarettes, no matter what the type. This automatically adjusted for inflation.

Catch up with inflation

There was need of a new law to restore the real value of the tax rate. It should index future taxes to inflation. It should reintroduce the ad valorem tax. Higher taxes on these items would make them more expensive, leading to less consumption—and that would benefit the health of Filipinos. Hence, the reform should be acceptable to the public.

What happened? The initial House version of the bill retained the four-tier classification system and their corresponding rates.

"It's awful," Solita Monsod, former economic planning secretary, said in October. "A lot of them are captured by the cigarette and tobacco lobby."

"It obviously goes against the entire principle of what was desired by the so-called indexation of the sin tax," said Monsod.

Senate Bill No. 1815, in contrast, offered a uniform tax rate for all cigarettes. It was simpler, easier to administer, and protected all Filipinos from the hazards of smoking. Most importantly, it automatically adjusted taxes to inflation.

Malacañang asked Congress to hike taxes on cigarettes and alcohol by 30 percent. But two months after a fiscal crisis was declared, Congress agreed to a 20-percent rise. Malacañang wanted it indexed to inflation. But Congress did not agree to this, conceding only an increase every two years.

Watered-down law

The final version of the law was of course a compromise between both chambers of Congress. The watered-down measure is called the Alcohol, Cigarette and Tobacco (ACT) law, which the President signed in December.

It slaps various higher rates on the four categories of cigarettes. For example, premiums are taxed P25 per pack, while those at the low end are slapped P2. Every two years, the taxes on all cigarette classes will be raised by 3.6 percent plus 16 centavos per pack.

The remaining bills are urgent measures needed to address the fiscal crisis. One can only hope that they will be defended by courageous lawmakers from the mighty lobbies.

Comments to darroyo@philonline.com

Business simulation game launched

THE PHILIPPINE Daily Inquirer signed up as the official media partner of Virtual Business League (VBL).

VBL is a business simulation game that is the first and biggest interscholastic virtual gaming competition in the country wherein players, also called "business warriors" will conceptualize, build, set up, or acquire their own technologies and companies. It will be participated in by major colleges and universities in Luzon and Davao. Tournament schedule is on Feb. 5, 2005; Semi-finals: 1:30 p.m.; Finals: 4 p.m. at Market! Market!, Global City, The Fort. For more information visit: www.petef.org.ph or contact Petef Foundation at Tel. Nos. 813-6398 / 7593870; Fax No. 8136397, or email at contactus@petef.org.ph.

Philippine Daily Inquirer, the country's leading newspaper, is the official media partner of VBL for broadsheet. The agreement was signed between Renato B. Garcia, president, Philippine Electronics and Telecommunications Federation (Petef) and Celine R. Madamba, INQUIRER AVP for strategic marketing communications.

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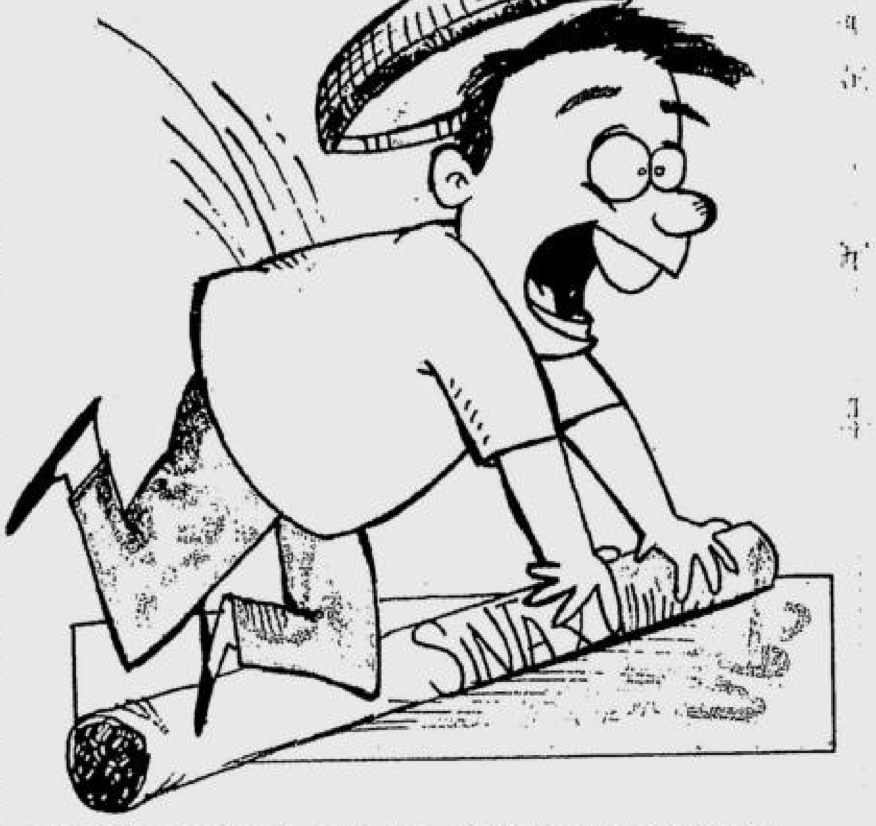
BUSINESS *Monday*

Business Features Editor **Margie Quimpo-Espino**

Tax sent wrong smoke signals



By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

THE DOWNGRADE could have been worse. The Philippines slipped one notch in the credit ratings of Standard and Poor's; it could have been two notches. But the fall was deserved—international creditors saw that crucial reforms were held hostage by powerful lobbies.

"The downgrades reflect the government's inadequate response to its fiscal problems," said the S&P statement.

Preview of things to come

The Palace proposed eight tax measures to bring in P80 million in additional revenue. As of this writing, only the sin tax bill has been signed into law, while another bill, on lateral attrition, is waiting in the wings.

The crafting of the "sin taxes," or those on tobacco and alcohol products, set a bad example. It offered the public a dismal preview of the compromises to come.

The Asian Development Bank expressed its worry about the tax reform bills being prepared by Congress, considering what happened to the sin tax bill. Country director Thomas Crouch noted the main defect of the new law on alcohol and tobacco taxes: it did not sufficiently provide for automatic adjustments for inflation. A visiting mission from the International Monetary Fund was also concerned about the watered-down law.

By volume or by value

Recall the old debates. A key issue was whether to tax by value or by volume. Suppose, for simplicity,

TAX/B14

More insights about self-improvement

A LEADER'S WAY
John C. Maxwell

DID you make any New Year's resolutions this year? More importantly, have you kept them?

I once heard an amazing statistic about such annual goals: 91 million Americans make a New Year's resolution each year, and—here's the startling part—70 million of them break those commitments by the end of the first week.

I can't point to a scientific study that explains why so many people fail in this regard. But if I had to make an educated guess, I'd say it has something to do with the measurability—or lack thereof—of the resolutions. Let's say your goal is to read more books about leadership and career development this year.

Which resolution are you more likely to keep: "I'm going to read more this year than I read last year," or "I'm going to read two chapters every day"?

When you attach a measurement to an intention, you're not just blindly shooting for some ambiguous goal. You have a real way to gauge your progress, which makes it much more likely that you will actually have some progress to gauge.

This is a key principle to remember as you start tackling the self-improvement projects I talked about in the last issue of this column. You cannot manage what you cannot measure. If growth in a certain area is essential to your success, you have to find a way to measure your improvement in that area. Otherwise, you won't improve.

Here are seven other insights about improvement that will help you to develop—and stick to—a blueprint for your own personal growth.

1. Set realistic expectations for your improvement.

Ian MacGregor says, "I work on the same principle as people who train horses. You start with low fences, easily achieved goals, and you work up. It is important in management never to ask people to try to accomplish goals they can't accept." In other words, set realistic expectations for yourself. Think about what you can tackle in a day, because whatever you tackle today, you also need to tackle tomorrow and the next day.

2. Continual change is essential for continual improvement.

This is one of the great paradoxes of success: The things which got you there are seldom the things which keep you there. There's no way around it. If you want to improve, you have to change.

3. Motivation gets you started; habits keep you going.

You can only stay fired up about working out at 5 a.m. (or learning to speak German, or teaching yourself how to build an Internet site, or whatever you're working on) for so long. After the novelty wears off, the daily discipline you established early in the process will spur you to continue.

4. We overestimate what we can do in a month, and we underestimate what we can do in a year.

As a society, we are infatuated with big and fast. We're always looking for a shortcut or a quicker way. But as anyone who has ever lost weight and kept it off will tell you, the improvements made over time are the ones that last.

5. Focus.

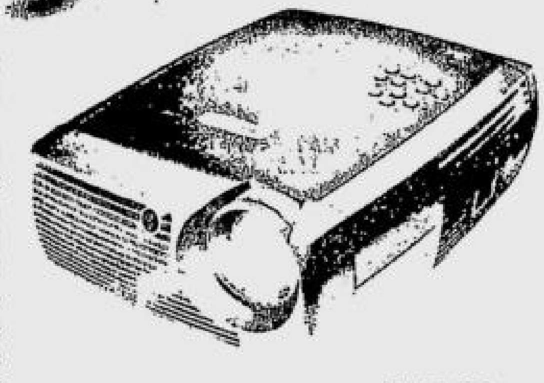
Notice what well-known psychologist William James said about this: "If you would be rich, you will be rich; and if you would be good, you will be good; and if you would be learned, you will be learned. But wish for one thing exclusively, and don't at the same time wish for a hundred other incompatible things just as strongly." His point? You can't achieve everything. You have to decide what is most important, and focus on that.

6. Spend 80 percent of your time working on your strengths.

As I often say, people don't pay for average. Rather than trying to improve weak skills, devote most of your energy to developing your gifts and abilities. This might sound like a strange bit of advice, but think about it. If, on a scale of one to ten, your marketing abilities are about a two, hard work might bring you up to a five, but that's still average. If you want to succeed, you must figure out what your strengths are and grow in those areas. (When I talk about strengths and weaknesses, I'm referring to skills. Two weaknesses that must be addressed are a lack of self-discipline and a bad attitude. You could have all the skills in the world, but if you have a poor attitude or you lack self-discipline, you will literally sabotage yourself.)

Finally, as you formulate your strategy for self-improvement and begin to work on areas that need refinement (or perhaps even a complete overhaul), ask this question continually: Is what I am doing today getting me closer to my goal tomorrow? If so, you're on the right track. If not, there's no time like the present to regroup and start moving in the right direction once again.

Feedback at slvguru@pldtDSL.net



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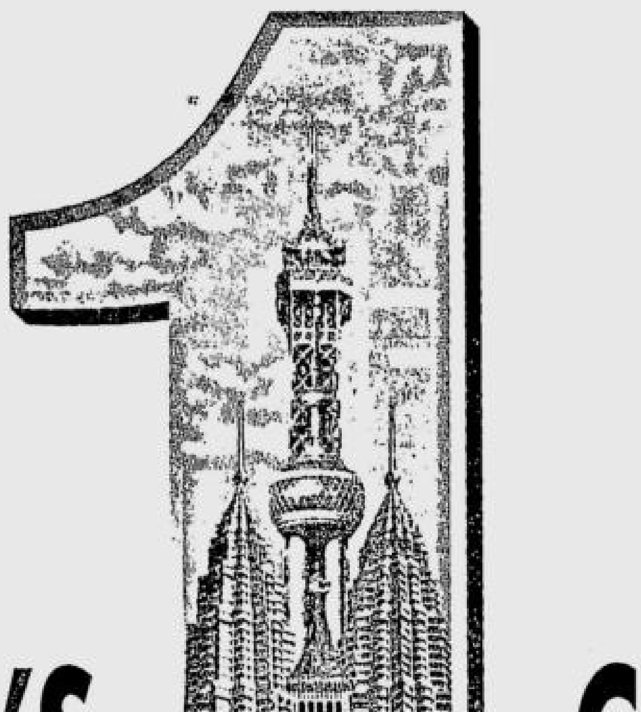

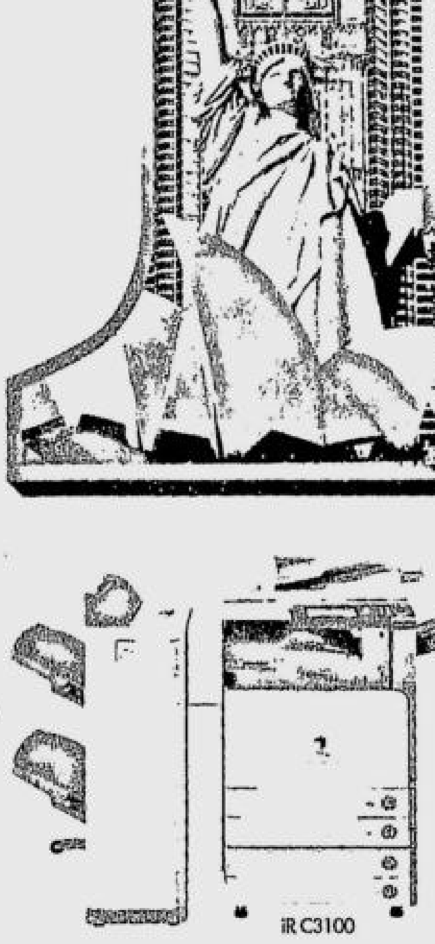

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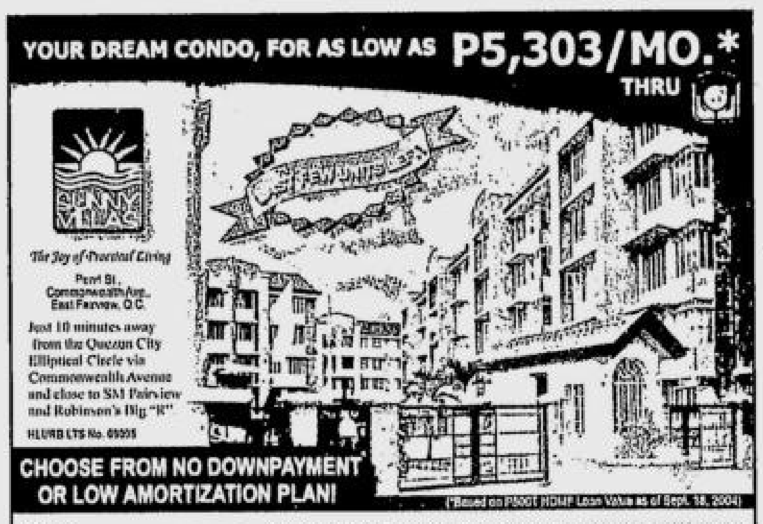

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late SIMPLICIO T. SANTOS and FELICISIMA A. SANTOS has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs as per Doc.#370; Page#73; Book#111; Series of 2004 before notary public Atty. Alan R. Bulawan of Manila PDI-January 10, 17 & 24, 2005

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E-mail address: bcwd2@skylnet.net

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Butuan City Water District hereby invites suppliers and distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid, in accordance with I.R.R. of R.A. 9184, for the supply and delivery of HDPE Pipes, G.I. Pipes and Fittings, Teflon Tape, Brass Fittings and C.I. Fittings.

PACKAGE 1. BRASS ANGLE METER VALVE, ISO (1 ITEM)

Qty.	Description
9,840 Pcs	25mmØ x 25mmØ

ABC: Php 2,829,000.00 Bidding Fee: Php 1,500.00

PACKAGE 2. BRASS COUPLING, ISO (2 ITEMS)
9,840 Pcs. 25mmØ; 2,480 Pcs. 32mmØ
ABC: Php1,423,884.00 Bidding Fee: Php 1,500.00

PACKAGE 3. BRASS UNION, ISO AND BRASS CORPORATION STOP, ISO (3 Items)
2,400 Pcs. 25mmØ Brass Union; 400 Pcs. 32mmØ Brass Union; 2,680 Pcs. 32mmØ Corporation Stop
ABC: Php1,671,760.00 Bidding Fee: Php 1,500.00

PACKAGE 4. G.I. PIPES SCH. 40 STD, G.I. FITTINGS SCH. 40 STD and TEFLON TAPE (8 ITEMS)
632 Pcs. Pipe, 1"Ø x 6m, 960 Pcs. Bushing Reducer, 1"Ø x ¾"Ø; 3,280 Pcs. Elbow, 1"Ø x 90º; 1,616 Pcs. Plug, ¾"Ø; 4,240 Pcs. Tee Reducer; 1"Ø x 3/4"Ø; 2,120 Pcs. Tee, 1"Ø x 1"Ø; 1,360 Pcs. Union, 1"Ø; 12,895 Rolls Teflon Tape, ¾" x 20m
ABC: Php 1,500,000.00 Bidding Fee: Php 1,500.00

PACKAGE 5. C.I. FITTINGS
Cross Tee Mechanical BNG, ISO (1 Item):
5 Pcs.100mmØ x 100mmØ
Cross Tee Reducer Mechanical, BNG, ISO (4 Items):
1 Pc. 150mmØ x 100mmØ; 6 Pcs. 200mm
6 Pcs. 200mmØ x 100mmØ;
1 Pc. 250mmØ x 100mmØ;
1 Pc. 250mmØx150mmØ
Flexible Coupling, ISO (7 Items): 70 Pcs. 100mmØ; 32 Pcs. 150mmØ; 36 Pcs. 200mmØ; 6 Pcs. 250mmØ; 6 Pcs. 300mmØ; 30 Pcs. 50mmØ; 18 Pcs. 75mmØ
Gate Valve Mechanical, NRS BNG, ISO (5 Items): 84 Pcs. 100mmØ; 33 Pcs. 150mmØ, 22 Pcs. 200mmØ; 5 Pcs. 50mmØ; 3 Pcs. 75mmØ
Reducer Mechanical, BNG, ISO (5 Items). 8 Pcs. 100mmØ x 75mmØ; 3 Pcs. 150mmØ x 100mmØ; 1 Pc. 150mmØ x 75mmØ; 3 Pcs. 200mmØ x 150mmØ; 3 Pcs. 200mmØ x 75mmØ
Tee Mechanical, BNG, ISO (2 Items): 58 Pcs. 100mmØ x 100mmØ; 2 Pcs. 150mmØ x 150mmØ
Tee Reducer Mechanical, BNG, ISO (6 Items): 1 Pc.150mmØ x 75mmØ; 3 Pcs. 200mmØ x 100mmØ; 1 Pc. 200mmØ x 150mmØ; 1 Pc. 250mmØ x 100mmØ; 1 Pc. 250mmØ x 200mmØ; 1 Pc. 300mmØ x 150mmØ
Valve Box Cover (1 Item): 131 Pcs.
Split Tee, ISO (9 Items): 10 Pcs. 150mmØ x 100mmØ; 10 Pcs. 200mmØ x 100mmØ; 10 Pcs. 200mmØ x 150mmØ; 10 Pcs. 250mmØ x 100mmØ; 10 Pcs. 250mmØ x 150mmØ; 5 Pcs. 250mmØx 200mmØ. 5 Pcs. 300mmØ x 100mmØ; 5 Pcs. 300mmØ x 150mmØ; 5 Pcs. 300mmØ x 200mmØ
Hydrant Head Residential (1 Item): 5 Pcs. 100mmØ
ABC: Php 4,080,000.00 Bidding Fee: Php 2,000.00

PACKAGE 6. HDPE PIPES, 32MMØ & 25MMØ, SDR 11, ISO (2 ITEMS)
406 Rolls 32mmØ x 90m; 892 Rolls 25mmØ x 150m
ABC: Php 3,600,000.00 Bidding Fee: Php 2,000.00

PACKAGE 7. HDPE PIPES, 63MMØ TO 315MMØ, SDR 11, ISO (7 ITEMS)
17 Pcs. 63mmØ x 6m; 136 Pcs. 90mmØ x 6m; 1,247 Pcs. 110mmØ x 6m; 309 Pcs. 160mmØ x 6m; 301 Pcs. 225mmØ x 6m; 7 Pcs. 280mmØ x 6m; 7 Pcs 315mmØ x 6m
ABC: Php 7,500,000.00 Bidding Fee: Php 2,000.00

Specifications, details and bidding documents are available to interested applicants upon payment of a non-refundable fee as indicated per package from January 25, 2005 to February 5, 2005, at the BAC Secretariat during its business hours.

Pre-Bid Conference shall be held at the Training Hall of BCWD Admin. Building on the following dates:
February 8, 2005 9:00A.M.-Brass Fittings;
2:00P.M.-GI Pipes,GI Fittings &Teflon Tapes
February 9, 2005 9:00 A.M.-C.I. Fittings
2:00 P.M.-HDPE Pipes

Submission and opening of sealed bids shall be at the same venue, which shall follow on:
March 3, 2005 9:00A.M.-Brass Fittings
2:00P.M.-GI Pipes,GI Fittings &Teflon Tepes
March 4, 2005 9:00A.M.-C.I. Fittings
2:00P.M.-HDPE Pipes

Butuan City Water District reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defect or formality therein, to assume no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expense incurred in the preparation of their bids, and to accept the offer most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) JORGE L. GUDUYO, C.E.
Chair, Bids and Awards Committee

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and whoever believes
in Me will never die."
John 11:25-26

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DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT
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FREE OBIT DESIGN

Susana Rellamas Fontillas

of Amungan, Iba, Zambales
Our dear "Lola Sanang".

Who peacefully passed away in the company of Mary, the Queen of Heaven and St. Josemaria Escriva on January 21, 2005 at the age of 93.

Her beloved husband (+) **Simplicio Fortin Fontillas**; son **Alfredo Fontillas** and (+) **Dr. Corazon Divino**; grandchildren **Dr. Ma. Teresa Fontillas** and **Nazario F. Luis**, **Dr. Raymund Alfredo Fontillas** and **Dr. Arlene Vida**, **Raymund Antonio Fontillas**, **Raymund Pancratius Fontillas** and **Eleanor Ann Cabarrus**, and **Dr. Raymund Angelo Fontillas** and **Jane Sumbillo**; great grandchildren **Josef**, **Anina**, **Javi**, **Tina**, **Corinne** and **Clarisse**, request relatives, friends and pious readers to join us in our prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapel at Guadalupe, Makati, Metro Manila.

There will be a Holy Mass on Tuesday, January 25, 2005, 8am. Interment will follow at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, Metro Manila at 10 am.

Our Dearly Beloved

HM1 CONSTANCIO "CONSTY" DE OCAMPO CHAN, USN

Born: January 3, 1954

Peacefully joined his Creator at the age of 50 on January 21, 2005.

His beloved wife **BETH**, son **CHRISTOPHER**, daughters **MAI MAI** and **KAYLEEN**, sisters **WHILHELMINA**, **CRISTINA**, **TERESA**, **MARIEKE**, **SOCORRO**, **MARINA**, **LILETTE**, and brothers **DIOSDADO Jr.**, **FRANCIS**, **OSCAR**, **ROBERT**, **SILVER**, **GERARD**, **BENJAMIN**, and **CHARLIE**, friends and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state in his residence at No. 247 Nancamaliran East Interior, Urdaneta City, Pangasinan.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 27,2005 after the 9am Mass at the Immaculate Concepcion Cathedral in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan. Burial will be held at the Urdaneta Memorial Park.

In Loving Memory

OF THE 3RD DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF

PAZ "PACHING" GRUET GARCIA

Who died on January 24, 2002

The following masses will be offered:

Perpetual Adoration Convent (Pink Sisters) Hemady, Q.C. .... 6:00 A.M.
EDSA Shrine, Ortigas Ave., cor. EDSA, Q.C. .... 12:15 P.M.
Christ the King, E. Rodriguez, Q.C. .... 6:00 P.M.
Mount Carmel Shrine, New Manila, Q.C. .... 6:00 P.M.
Santuario De San Jose, Greenhills, Mandaluyong .... 6:15 P.M.
Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Brixton Hill, Q.C. .... 6:30 P.M.

The family requests the pious reader to pray for the repose of her soul.

ATTY. EDUARDO "BOY" CASTILLO

Former Vice Mayor of Las Pinas

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 22, 2005 at the age of 51.

His loving wife **MARIPAZ**; children **ROQUE**, **REINA** and **LEANNE**; his mother **LOLITA**; his sisters **NENE**, **BABY**, **ANDIE**, **GIRLIE** and **LADYBIRD**; his in-laws, nieces, nephews and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Philamlife Village, Las Piñas City.

Interment will be on January 25, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 8:00 am Mass.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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John 14:1-2

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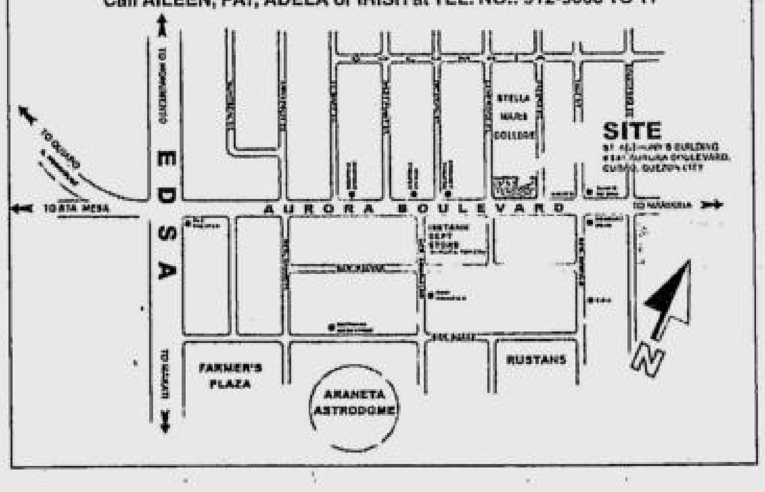

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INVITATION TO BID

The Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) invites interested parties to bid for its commercial-industrial lot described as follows:

Lot Area : 18,812 sq.m. more or less
Location : 112 Eagle St., Bo. Ugong, Pasig City
Improvements : Office-warehouse buildings (formerly occupied by Warner-Lambert)
Title : Clean
Indicative Price : Php 16,000.00 per sq.m.

Interested bidders are allowed to bid lower than the indicative price. Payment may be on installment with at least 30% down and the balance payable for not more than 3 years. The BSP reserves the right to award to the bid most advantageous to the BSP.

For inquiries contact:
Mr. Danilo dela Cruz
Director, Corporate Assets Management
Boy Scouts of the Philippines
181 Natividad Almeda-Lopez Sts.
Ermita, Manila
Telefax (02) 527-5111;
Tel. 527-8317 local 226 & 203

(PDI - Jan. 19 & 24, 2005)

LB (Land Bank) Realty Development Corporation

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND TO BID

All contractors, registered and/or classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) for Buildings and Industrial Plant and preferably with experience in the construction of bank building or projects of identical scope of works and technology, are invited to apply for pre-qualification and to submit their bids for the renovation/construction of the following LBP BRANCH OFFICES.

Branch Office	Location	Category
San Fernando Branch with Training Center	La Union	Medium
Bayawan Branch	Negros Oriental	Medium
Macabalan E.O. Renovation	Puntod, Cagayan de Oro City	Small

Pre-qualification requirements may be obtained from the Purchasing Unit of the Land Bank Realty Development Corporation at 30th flr LBP Plaza, 1598 M.H. del Pilar corner J. Quintos Sts., Malate, Manila. LBRDC reserves the right to change the cost estimate, the date of issuance of bid documents, pre-bid conference, submission of bids and date of bidding. Due notice of changes shall however be communicated by LBRDC to invited bidders.

LBRDC likewise reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or formality, assume no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bid and to accept the bid most advantageous to the company.

For further details, please call Eng'r. Jaime S. Mendoza/Allan G. Redondo/Aries L. Mendoza at 405-7169 / 405-7402 / 405-7135.

(Sgd.) CHAIRMAN
Committee on Bids and Awards

(PDI–Jan. 24, 2005)

POEA 24-HR HOTLINES 722-1144 • 722-1155

Call for Application extended until 28 January 2005

The Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc.

Executive Director

Competitive salary package

The Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc. (LCF) is an independent NGO that has been established with a US $ 200,000 Trust Fund currently committed from The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI). The Fund's purpose is to make direct investments in, and provide ongoing support to farmer-led natural resource management initiatives in the Philippine uplands.

The Board of Trustees is looking for an outstanding Executive Director who will:

- Lead the development of the LCF's investment strategy and policy
- Bring into the Board of Trustees new members with recognized expertise in natural resource management and the capacity to negotiate and influence national-level policy.
- Develop and submit proposals to donor institutions and partners for fund raising
- Supervise, coordinate, guide and support activities of the Field Officer
- Develop relationships with potential strategic partners and donor institutions.

The Candidate:

- A strategic leader and a strong manager, an influential network builder, able to communicate effectively with a diverse range of partners and in multi-cultural settings and mobilize resources effectively.
- An advanced degree in Natural Resource Management, Agriculture, Forestry or Agroforestry science, Rural development or other related field
- Fluency in English and Filipino. Working knowledge of Visayan is highly desirable

Duty Station and Tenure:
The successful application will be based at the office of the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines in Claveria, Misamis Oriental, but should have the flexibility to travel to other project sites as required.

Applicants are invited to send a detailed curriculum vitae, transcript of records, 2x2 photo and names and addresses of three referees (including telephone, fax numbers and e-mail address) via e-mail to: Manuel Bertomeu (m_bertomeu1@terra.es) or Glo Acaylar (g.acaylar@cgiar.org)
Applications will be considered until *28 January 2005*.

PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE
INVITATION TO BID

The Privatization and Management Office (PMO) is offering for sale, on "as-is-where-is" bases certain National Government (NG)/National Power Corporation (NPC) properties:

The assets are offered as follows:

1. PUBLIC BIDDING

Description	Indicative Price	Submission of Bids
A parcel of land with an area of 4,417 square meters located at Arnaiz Avenue corner Amorsolo St., Makati City	P 187,722,500.00	February 16, 2005 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

2. OFFER FOR SALE

Description	Price	Submission of Offers
Two parcels of land with a total area of 6,233 square meters, located at No. 1, Don Bosco St., Brgy. San Lorenzo, Makati City	OPEN PRICE	February 17, 2005 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Sealed bids/offers will be received at the specified dates from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and immediately thereafter, the bids/offers shall be opened and tabulated in the presence of the bidders/offerors at the PMO Conference Room, 6th Floor, Privatization and Management Office, 104 Gamboa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Interested parties are advised to deal directly with the PMO Marketing Department. Authenticated bidding documents, together with the Asset Specific Catalogues, may be secured from PMO for a nominal fee of P10,000.00.

In the event that the public bidding becomes a failure, the PMO reserves the right to accept proposals for the subject assets.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Matthew R. de Guzman at telephone numbers 817-8762 or 818-4733.

(PDI--Jan. 22, 23 & 24, 2005)

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Required No. of Participants	Discounted Rate/Seat	Actual Savings	Promo Duration
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18	P2,399+10% VAT	P5,400.00	Until January 14, 2005

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITEE
(Head Office)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License to apply for pre-qualification and if later found qualified, to bid for the project described below:

Project Title	Proposed Construction of the Perimeter Fence of the BSP Acquired Property at Brgy. Lumil, Silang, Cavite
Scope of Work	Furnishing of all materials, labor, tools, equipment, technical supervision and other services and performing all operations necessary for the completion of the proposed construction of the perimeter fence of the BSP acquired property in accordance with the approved plans & specifications and subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.
Project Location	Brgy. Lumil, Silang, Cavite
Approved Budget	Pesos Seven Million One Hundred Twenty Six Thousand Pesos Only (P7,126,000.00)
Contract Duration	One Hundred Calendar Days (100 cd)
Souce of Funding	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Minimum Requirement (Criteria)	
PCAB License	IAC category of at least Small "B" (Building and Industrial Plant)
Contractor's Construction Experience	Should have completed within the last five (5) years (2000 to present) at least two (2) projects involving construction of perimeter/ security fences preferably using prefabricated components or other similar in nature and complexity one of which costs not less than Three Million Five Hundred Thousand pesos.
Certification of Satisfactory Performance	Should be able to submit a certification of Satisfactory Performance from the client for at least two (2) of the declared completed similar project costing not less than 3.5M pesos.
Net Financial Contracting Capacity computed: *as 10x (Current Asset less Current Liabilities) minus (Value of all on-going contracts including awarded yet to be started)*	At least Seven Million One Hundred Twenty Six Thousand Pesos Only (P7,126,000.00)

Credit Line or Cash Deposit Certificate in the amount of not less than Seven Hundred Twelve Thousand Six Hundred Pesos (P712,600.00)

Eligibility Statement Forms	
Cost of Forms	Two Hundred Pesos per set (P200.00/set)
Date of Issuance	Jan. 18 to 28, 2005
Deadline of Submission	January 28, 2005 / 4:30 p.m.
Notice of Eligibility / Ineligibility	
Date of Issuance	February 11, 2005
Bid / Tender Documents	Shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of the non-refundable cost of the documents.
Cost of Documents	Five Thousand Pesos per set (P5,000/set)
Date of Issuance	Feb. 14 to 15, 2005
Pre-bid Conference	
Date and Time	February 18, 2005 / 10:00 AM
Venue	MR2A, Five Storey Building, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts.
Submission and Opening of Bids	
Deadline of Submission	March 9, 2005 / 11:00 AM

For inquiries, please call BAC Secretariat-telephone no. 524-7011 local 3143.

The venue for the issuance and submission of accomplished eligibility statements and bid documents is at the BAC Secretariat, Room 204, 2nd Floor-Five Storey Building, BSP Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts., Manila, 9:30 am to 12:00 nn & 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm.

Schedule for issuance of notice of eligibility/ineligibility up to deadline of **submission of bids** may be subject to change.

Guidelines stipulated in the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 & its Implementing Rules and Regulations shall apply relative to the bidding and award of contract including its implementation

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractor/s whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/indemnify the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) MELPIN A. GONZAGA
Vice-Chairman

(PDI–Jan. 17 and 24, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture
AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTE
ATI Bldg., Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila 1100
Tel. No. (63-2) 928-7397 Fax No. (63-2) 920-9792 E-mail: atida@i-next.net

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Agricultural Training Institute of the Department of Agriculture (DA-ATI) invites all qualified contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the construction of pig buildings and pens for a 60-sow level farm and 10-boar Artificial Insemination Center, consisting of

- one (1) building for dry and pregnant sows,
- one (1) building for farrowing sows,
- four (4) buildings for fatteners,
- one (1) nursery building for weaners and
- (one) 1 building for 10 A.I. boars

within a prescribed period of 180 days upon receipt of the Notice To Proceed.

The project site is at the Agricultural Training Institute – International Training Center on Pig Husbandry (ATI-ITCPH), located at Brgy. Marawoy, Lipa City.

Funds for the construction of the building will be sourced out from the Agricultural Competitive Enhancement Fund - approved Project entitled, **"Establishment and Operation of a 60-Sow Level Pig Farm and 10-Boar Artificial Insemination Center."**

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is P 4,746,625.35.

For this particular bid, participating contractors must have a minimum Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) Medium A classification for buildings and should be experienced in the construction of piggery projects.

The schedule of activities is as follows:

	ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
1.	Submission of Letter of Intent	Jan. 24-28, 2005	8:00am to 5:00pm
2.	Issuance of eligibility requirements	Jan. 24-31, 2005	8:00am to 5:00pm
3.	Submission of eligibility requirements and issuance of bid documents	Feb. 7, 2005	8:00am to 5:00pm
4.	Pre-Bid Conference	Feb. 11, 2005	1:00pm
5.	Submission of bid proposal/Opening of bids	Feb. 15, 2005	1:00pm

The venue for the pre-bidding conference and of the opening of bids is the Administrative and Finance Conference Room, ATI building, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

Eligibility requirements and other bid documents can be obtained from the ATI BAC III Secretariat after payment of non-transferable/non-refundable registration fee in the amount of P 500.00.

For further inquiries, please contact the ATI BAC III Secretariat through Mr. Jose D. Tanhueco at Telephone Nos. (02) 929-8541 to 49 loc 275.

The DA-ATI reserves the right to reject all bids, to waive any formalities or defects found, or to accept such bids or to award to any contractor whose bid is considered most advantageous to the DA-ATI or to the government.

(Sgd.) DIRECTOR RONALDO M. SALUNGA
Chairperson, ATI BAC III

GININTUANG MASAGANANG ANI

(PDI–Jan. 17 & 24, 2005)

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281 J.P. Rizal St., Project 4, Quezon City
Apply Monday – Saturday, 1 p.m.

Republic of the Philippines
Regional Trial Court
National Capital Judicial Region
Manila
Branch 1

IN THE MATTER OF THE TESTATE ESTATE OF THE LATE PAZ A. DE TUASON.

MARIA PAZ GODINEZ LOPEZ, SP. PROC. 03-105769
Petitioner,
x-----------------------------x

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

LETTERS TESTAMENTARY having been issued in the above-entitled case in favor of MARIA PAZ GODINEZ LOPEZ residing at No. 7 King Fisher, Green Meadows, Quezon City. Notice is hereby issued requiring all persons having claims for money against the decedent PAZ DE TUAZON, arising from contact, express or implied, whether the same be due, not due or contingent, for funeral expenses and expenses of the last sickness of the said decedent and judgment for money against her, to file said claims with this Office within six (6) months after the date of the first publication of this Notice, serving a copy thereof upon the aforementioned MARIA PAZ GODINEZ LOPEZ, the appointed Executrix of the above-entitled case.

The Executrix is hereby ordered to cause the immediate publication of this Notice in a newspaper of general circulation for three (3) consecutive weeks and its posting for the same period in four (4) public places in the city of Manila, decedent's last place of residence.

WITNESS THE HONORABLE TITA BUGHAO ALISUAG, this 19th day of November 2004, Manila City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) ROSALINDA S. MEDINACELI-GEPIGON
Clerk of Court V

(PDI- Jan. 24, 31 & Feb. 7, 2005)

Farmers Council vows to support NFA

OFFICERS and members of the provincial Farmers Action Council (PFAC) here headed by Pedro Mancera signified support to the National Food Authority (NFA) in ensuring food security and responding to the needs of farmers and consumers in the province. Mancera, during a recent meeting of the PFAC, said that the farmers in the province are satisfied with the assistance of the NFA, particularly the agency's decision to increase the buying price of palay from P9 to P10/kg. The NFA increased the buying price of palay by P1/kg in response to the clamor of farmers for the agency to help augment their post production expenses. The new buying price has been implemented the whole-year of 2004. The new palay buying price integrates the P1/kg incentive granted to farmers' organizations (FOs) under the Post Production Incentive for the Service Offered (PPISO) program of the agency. The PFAC in Camarines Norte, meanwhile, continues to closely coordinate with the NFA in the full implementation of pro-farmer programs and projects in the province. For any inquiry and comment on the NFA's PPISO program, the public may send text messages through 0917-6210927.

BP's Neo-Filipino: Playing Maestro Ryan

CULTURAL Center of the Philippines, Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc, and San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts present Ballet Philippines and San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra in BP's Neo-Filipino: Playing Maestro Ryan featuring the world premiere of Ballet Philippines' choreographies to Ryan Cayabyab's bestseller "Great Filipino Love Songs" and his new orchestrations of Philippine Folk Songs to be performed by the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra on March 11 and 12. Gala – 8 p.m./ Regular – 8 p.m./Matinee 2 p.m. CCP Main Theater. For ticket reservations, call 551-1003/ 551-0221, Email at: balletphilippines@axti.com or text 2960 (Smart, Globe and Sun), keyword BALLET — text BALLET space <Message "Pls reserve..."> to 2960. Tickets start at P 300.

NCCA Grants for Las Piñas Church

AS THE 30th International Bamboo Organ Festival (slated from Feb. 3 to 11) is in full swing, the Bamboo Organ Foundation Inc., the organizer of the annual event, is also in deep preparations for the restoration of the St. Joseph Parish Church, more popularly known as the Las Piñas Church, and home of the famed Bamboo Organ (the only pipe organ in the world), festival's venue. The restoration is made possible through a grant from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) facilitated by Sen. Manuel B. Villar, Jr. and Congresswoman Cynthia Villar. Spearheaded by Architects Liza Santos and Danilo Panganiban, who also completed the renovation of the old St. Joseph's Academy Gymnasium, the church restoration includes the repair of its façade, which entails the replacement of the old adobe stones. The repair commenced last November 2004 and is expected to be completed in time for the festival. Part and parcel of the grant is the electrical rewiring of the entire church interior and sacristy contracted through the Integrated Electrical Control Corporation headed by Benito Amurao. The entire rewiring was completed in September 2003. For more information on the festival's forthcoming concerts, please call the Bamboo Organ Foundation at 825-7190/826-7718/ 8261856, SM Ticketnet at 911-4087, CCP Box Office at 8321125, Landmark at 810-9990 or check out the Festival Website: http://bamboo.diegocera.com.

INFOTECH
Text us your feedback: inquirer it name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
Editor **Leo Magno**

Talks on administration of '.ph' at stalemate

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

JOSE Emmanuel Disini, administrator of the ".ph" Internet domain, has broken his silence as he lashed back at the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) regarding government's move to settle the administration issues surrounding the ".ph" domain.

Responding to questions posed in his weblog (jed.i.ph), Disini did not mince words as he criticized the CICT, particularly its chairman, Virgilio Peña.

The CICT is the country's highest policy-making body on IT matters. It is the government body currently mandated to enforce new guidelines on the administration of the ".ph" domain. The guidelines force Disini to decide between being a registrar or a registry of the ".ph" domain.

The CICT originally gave Disini until January 15 to decide but last week extended the deadline after both parties failed to come to an agreement.

Disini has to choose between accepting registration requests for the ".ph" domain name or being the central repository of those domain names.

Some members of the association of Philippine Internet service providers and the local Internet community have criticized DotPH for being both a registrar and the registry of the ".ph" domain, prompting the government to issue guidelines that require DotPH to choose between the two functions.

"Basically, we have no idea why Mr. Peña wants us to choose between being a registrar or registry. We've asked him several times in person, and in our letters to him what the rationale for this was. What problem is he trying to fix? Does he think that by closing down the DotPH registrar division, more companies will apply to be registrars? If you look at our website, all it takes to be a DotPH registrar is for someone to buy 12 domains! Today, DotPH has over 200 registrars, and is actively encouraging more to apply," Disini said.

"Does he think that by doing this, the prices of '.ph' domains would drop? We've tried to explain that domain prices are determined by market forces," added Disini.

Disini, who is also the chief executive of DotPH, the sole registrar and registry of the ".ph" domain, argued that practically every Internet service provider sells ".com" domains and ".ph" domains in the country.

He said that a survey done in 2004 showed that the retail price of ".com" and ".ph" are roughly the same at $35 a year.

"By preventing DotPH from being a registrar, you reduce competition in the marketplace and this may actually cause '.ph' domains to become more expensive than '.com.' And even if Mr. Peña were to order the registry to drop wholesale prices to the level of '.com,' it's clear that the retail price of '.ph' would not change," Disini said.

The DotPH executive claims that he is "totally in the dark" with regard to government's intention to force them to choose between being a registry or a registrar.

He said that he has asked Peña to itemize what problems CICT sees in the way "DotPH operates, in our service, in our policies, etc."

"Then we can talk about ways to solve this, and then draft a contract that binds us (and the government) to prevent these problems from recurring. We've asked for this so many times, that I can only guess that Mr. Peña is concerned that he won't be able to find any substantial problems in our operations," said Disini.

The patience of Peña and the CICT is also wearing thin.

In an earlier interview, Peña had this to say: "We can't wait forever. We don't want this matter to be delayed. We're giving them (DotPH) a week or so to decide again but we hope to move forward."

Two weeks ago, Peña had asked DotPH in a meeting with lawyer Jesus Disini—brother of the DotPH executive—and DotPH spokesperson Emil Avanceña to submit a formal letter containing concerns they had about the CICT guideline.

Disini had argued that the government guidelines do not provide enough information to allow DotPH to make a decision.

"So I told them to document [the] questions that they have about our guidelines," Peña said, recalling his meeting with Jesus Disini and Avanceña.

Peña said most of the concerns of DotPH were "technical" in nature, but generally they wanted some assurances from government that they would not be short-changed.

Jesus Disini and Avanceña were told to submit a formal letter detailing their concerns, thereby giving them an extension beyond the Jan. 15 deadline, Peña added.

Disini was eventually given until Jan. 21 to submit the letter, but that new deadline lapsed without a reply from DotPH.

Prior to this extension, Disini was given a 90-day deadline by the CICT to comply with the guidelines put together by a technical advisory group of the National Telecommunications Commission.

Peña said that if DotPH fails to make a decision, the Philippine government would have no choice but to ask the Internet Corporation for Assigned Numbers (ICANN) to redelegate the administration of the domain name.

ICANN is the international body that oversees the administration of top-level domains.

Disini, however, is unperturbed.

"Please take a look at RFC 1591 (ICANN memo), which states that ICANN will not step in unless there is proof that DotPH has 'substantially misbehaved.' This is why I think it's important for Mr. Peña to really study if there are any substantial (and substantiated) problems in our operation. It helps him seize control of the registry (if that is really his objective); but more importantly, it allows us to start discussing ways to solve these problems which may not necessarily be as drastic and confrontational," Disini said.

He said that the CICT guideline, as crafted, was "way too onerous for anyone to agree with."

Disini said the guidelines, for instance, give the CICT the right to impose arbitrary rules and regulations.

"And if we disagreed, we would have no choice but to face redelegation! I don't see how any registry can possibly agree to this. Who would invest time and money in a business that depends on the whims of the CICT? In my humble opinion, that's a formula that encourages corruption," he said.

He also stressed that the guideline is riddled with errors.

In article XII, section 2 of the CICT guideline, which states that the administrator should "divest itself of either the operations of Registry or its registar operations," Disini argued that the ".ph" administrator has no equity in the registry or registrar operation.

"Never had, and never will! So theoretically, even if we wanted to comply with the guidelines, we can't!" he added.

He said that if Peña wanted to solve problems, he would have involved DotPH in the making of the guidelines.

"I also just had a conversation with Mr. Peña, where he absolutely refused to discuss amending the guidelines and repeatedly threatened to redelegate. So I guess the die is cast," said Disini.

INQ7.net develops gaming website

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

WHILE there are hundreds of foreign websites that offer rich information and news about gaming, none have so far been actively dedicated to providing news and information about the growing gaming community and industry in the Philippines.

For this reason, INQ7 Interactive Inc. or INQ7.net, a joint venture of media giants Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA Network Inc., has launched an online gaming site called "hackenslash," (www.hackenslash.net) that aims to provide a local spin and perspective on gaming and other industries related to it.

"Numerous gaming websites now offer rich information but they are foreign sites. They don't have the local (Filipino) flavor. Obviously, they don't know the local gaming scenario. Hackenslash writers and reviewers are all based in the Philippines and, therefore, have the local perspective, which the foreign sites don't," said Ramon Lizardo vice president for business and linkages of INQ7.net, as he explained the rationale behind the creation of the site.

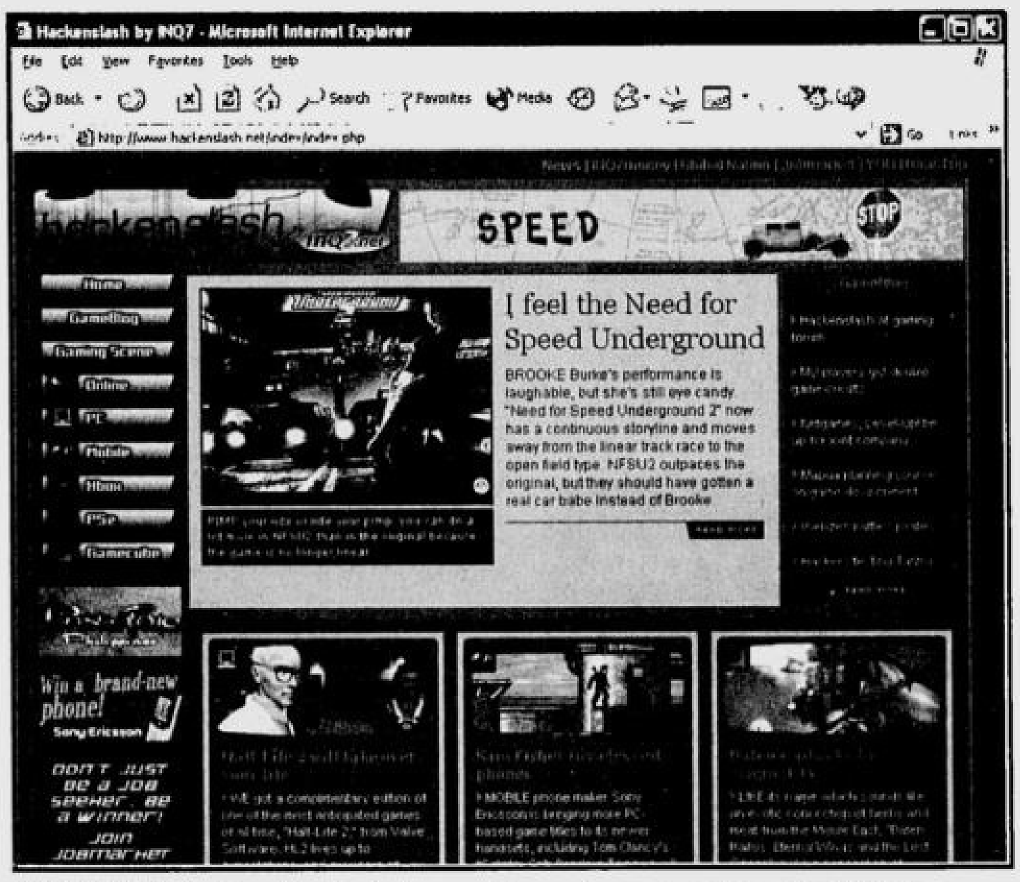
Gaming enthusiasts, developers and publishers today have two sources of information about the gaming industry: online and print. Information found on online gaming websites are usually from the perspective of US and European gamers, while a few print gaming magazines in the country offer content that are mostly syndicated from the United States and Europe.

"This brings us back to the problem of perspective," said Leo Magno, executive editor of INQ7.net and Final Boss of hackenslash. "This is not about riding the wave (of the boom of online gaming in the Philippines). It was just the logical thing to do. Online gamers are, well, already online, so it makes sense to create an online resource for them."

Apart from featuring standard game reviews for game consoles, wireless devices and the PC, "hackenslash" will in the future allow readers to post comments online, he said.

The website also features a "gameblog" that delivers news snippets to readers in real-time.

"There are a host of other online gaming sites that have come before hackenslash, many of which are already widely known to online gamers; but, we believe we can make a distinction between our site and other sites because of our local flavor," said Lizardo, when asked what challenges the new website faces initially.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I feel the Need for Speed Underground

BROOKE Burke's performance is laughable, but she's still eye candy. "Need for Speed Underground 2" now has a continuous storyline and moves away from the linear track race to the open field type. NFSU2 outpaces the original, but they should have gotten a real car babe instead of Brooke.

HACKENSLASH offers a local look at games, the gaming community and the Philippine gaming industry.

He, however, admitted that generating revenues for a gaming website will be its foremost challenge in the short-term.

"We will focus all our efforts on reaching out to the Filipino gamers who, at that point, are more likely already readers or potential readers of INQ7.net," Lizardo added.

Where was the gaming website's name derived?

The website's name was based on the term "hack and slash," according to Magno. Hacking and slashing are rudimentary methods by which players defeat enemies in most video games.

"Some may say 'hack and slash' is disparaging, since gamers want more gameplay depth than just hacking and slashing any enemy that gets in their way. However, we can't deny that hacking and slashing are some of the rudimentary methods by which players defeat enemies," he said.

Magno said that even with the addition of new tactics being employed in today's games, or with the use of different weapons or even bare fists to bash opponents to a pulp, these methods are still a variety of what has generally become "hacking and slashing."

"Hackenslash basically emphasizes the core of games. It takes a look at the heart of the game and what makes them good or bad. It seeks to get to the heart of games and the heart of the gaming industry by hacking and slashing away at the fluff and noise and going to the core, or what is important," Magno said.

In the medium-term, hackenslash might explore strategic partnering with industry players, whether they are existing online gaming publications or game providers, said Lizardo.

"This is always a possibility and certainly part of our future plans. However, we will need to look into each one carefully and make sure that we have singular objectives and win-win opportunities are clear," the executive said.

Magno is more forward-looking.

"Hackenslash can be seen as a website on its own due to the booming number of online gamers in the Philippines, the increasing interest of game publishers and the accelerating use of broadband Internet," he said.

ICT chairman to talk on government policy on video, online games

HOW is the government responding to the growing gaming business in the Philippines and what are the approaches it is adopting to help improve the industry?

Virgilio L. Peña, chair of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, will try to shed light on these issues when he delivers his keynote in the 3rd Annual CyberPress Forum on January 28 from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m. at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City.

The conference, organized by the IT Journalists Association of the Philippines Inc. or CyberPress, is titled "Plug & Play: A Forum on the Philippine Gaming Industry." The event is being supported by Microsoft Philippines, Sun Microsystems Philippines, INQ7 Interactive Inc., ABS-CBN Interactive, Smart Communications, Allied Telesyn, Epson, Globequest, Sony Ericsson Philippines, Airborne Access, ePLDT, Hewlett-Packard Philippines, MSI Digiland, Netopia, Nokia, PLDT, STI Education Services Group, Canon and Level-Up!

To give gamers a preview of what's in store for them, IDC Philippines research manager Miguel Ravago will talk about the general direction of the local gaming industry in contrast with its global industry counterparts.

Dr. Josephine Aguilar, a sociologist from the University of Santo Tomas, will also discuss the sociological aspects and the impact of gaming on Philippine society.

Other resource persons scheduled to present include Niel Dagondon of Anino Entertainment who will share the company's experiences as a local game developer while giving bits of advise to budding young developers, and Dennis Manzano of Sony Ericsson Philippines who will discuss how the country can jump into the mobile game development business.

Netopia's Raymond Ricafort will reveal the success of the company's PC-based video game service, while International Game Development Association Philippines representative Ranulf Goss will tackle the prospects for Filipino game developers in the cutthroat gaming industry.

Level-Up! game boss Ben Colayco, the man behind the phenomenal rise of "Ragnarok" in the Philippines, will share the firm's experiences in turning gaming into a social event.

World Cybergames Philippine team leader Tjader Regis will discuss what kind of opportunities await Filipino gamers in the international gaming scene.

For inquiries and for registration, contact Events@Work at 897-6391/897-7091 local 3 or e-mail cyberpress@eventsatwork.com.

3Com switches power online gaming firm

LEVEL Up!, the first Filipino online gaming publisher, raises the ante for computer gaming with the deployment of the 3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 4900 and the 3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 4950.

With its increasing number of subscribers to Ragnarok Online, Level Up! continues to provide entertainment for over one million Filipino users, with around 35,000 players at any given time—all of whom are expecting a solid virtual reality world for their fantasy games.

"Since the conception of Ragnarok Online, 3Com was the obvious choice. Setting aside the details of the fantasy world, our goal is simple—to provide online services to a multitude of subscribers 24 hours a day, not unlike an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or a Search Engine. Such a set-up would entail a server farm with a performance criterion that would be all-encompassing—consistent output, reliability, expansion-readiness and no downtime whatsoever. The key to the server farm lies in its switches, and in this game, 3Com has always been the winner," said Abet de la Cruz, chief technical officer of Level Up!

The 3Com technology-supported server farm makes use of the 3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 4900 series due to its non-blocking Layer 2 and Layer 3 Gigabit Ethernet switching output. Level Up! uses over 200 processors to maintain the constantly shifting gaming environment; with this set-up, Gigabit Ethernet switching guarantees a near-seamless experience for the gamer as well as optimal server usage and data flow on the hardware end.

"Ultimately, this means 56 Gbps switching performance—just what is needed to meet the demands of thousands of eager gamers," de la Cruz said. "Level Up! has experienced zero downtime with 3Com. We have been making use of the same old load balancer to manage our Web server effectively. As Ragnarok Online engages more gamers and Level-Up! expands its operations, we believe we're in the right direction and using the right product."

Sun positions new Solaris 10 as alternative to Linux

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

SUN MICROSYSTEMS is taking steps to turn its new Solaris 10 operating system into open source software much like the widely used Linux operating system, a company official said.

By promoting Solaris 10 as a "better" alternative to Linux, Chong Soon Cheong, senior product manager for Sun Microsystems Asia South, said Sun hopes to revive its flagging Unix business in Philippines.

He said local clients will be given a chance to port existing Linux installations to the free version of Solaris 10, which he said resolves most of the problems usually encountered in both Linux and Unix.

Cheong also noted that porting Linux and Unix installation to Solaris 10 was relatively easy as Solaris 10 is a Unix variant.

Unlike previous versions, Solaris 10 can run on either Sun's SPARC platform or on platforms based on the Intel x86 and AMD Opteron64 chip architectures.

Cheong is also eyeing the country's large community of Java programmers.

Java is a programming language developed by Sun.

"The Philippines is a potentially good market for Solaris 10, indicated by the presence of a big community of Java programmers. These programmers can fully utilize applications they developed on top of the Solaris 10," Cheong said.

BUSINESS

NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS OK

BSP sees stable outlook in 6 mos

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES may have to wait for at least a year to get another chance to improve its credit rating from Standard & Poor's, Moody's Investor Service or Fitch Ratings, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

But, according to the BSP chief, the good news is there is a real possibility that the major global rating firms may change their outlook on the Philippines to "stable" or even "positive" in the next three to six months.

Also, the country may likely retain its investment grade rating with Japan Rating and Investment Information Inc. (Japan R&I), which is currently in town to conduct its own review on sovereign debt ratings, Buenaventura said.

The BSP chief said the visiting team from Japan R&I, in a dialogue with economic managers last week, raised their concerns over the same fiscal issues that prompted S&P to lower the country's long-term sovereign foreign currency debt rating to BB- from BB.

But Buenaventura said the Japanese credit rating agency was "more pragmatic" and thus unlikely to follow the S&P's move.

"I think there might be a chance," Buenaventura said. "It's a question of whether they will accept our word that the key tax measures will be passed.

"They are more interested in how much revenue will be raised rather than which taxes will be passed. As long as it will generate P80 billion, that's good enough for them."

In a statement, S&P said it had lowered its expectations that the government would be able to raise tax receipts materially from the current low level of 12 percent of gross domestic product and that the government's debt burden would move to a clearer downward trend.

With the public sector debt at 110 percent of GDP and government interest expense at nearly 40 percent of revenue, S&P had said prompt passage of the government's fiscal plan was necessary to support the Philippines' ratings at their previous levels.

For its part, London-based Fitch Ratings spared the Philippines from a debt rating downgrade last December, but changed its outlook to "negative" from "stable" due to heightened concerns on fiscal vulnerability.

A "negative" outlook indicates that a downgrade is possible in the near term while a "positive" outlook indicates a possible upgrade. A "stable" outlook means that the current rating may be maintained in the near term.

Moody's, which is scheduled to send its own review team next month, is said to be finding it more difficult to justify keeping its current rating on the Philippines. Buenaventura said without positive developments on the legislation of tax measures in Congress, Moody's could follow S&P's action.

The BSP chief said the appetite for Philippine bonds was still good and the government could still tap the foreign debt market for its financing requirements this year.

"It's still doable, except that we're paying on the high side," Buenaventura said. "They are still saying in the short term we have adequate reserves, the growth is still there, inflation although on the high side is not out of control and interest rates are still relatively low. The near term is all right.

"The concern is on debt sustainability, that if we fail to pass these measures there will come a point when we will start having problems paying it down. That's when we'll lose access to the international capital market."

BUENAVENTURA

Buenaventura said it was important that the Philippines get a change in outlook from "negative" to "stable" in the next three to six months and, from thereon, target further change to a "positive" outlook.

"What's important is if the outlook is stable or positive, because the market will start discounting it," he said. "The moment we are [given a] positive [outlook], the pricing of Philippine bonds will be as though we are upgraded already."

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Eco-friendly fuel cause gets boost from USAID

WITH FUNDING assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), nongovernment organization Klima Climate Change Center is currently setting up the Clean Transport Technology Clearinghouse (CTTC) to promote the use of environment-friendly transport fuel and technology.

The CTTC will, upon completion, contain relevant information on the use of clean transport technology as well as proper traffic management and driver discipline. These may soon be found on the Klima website—www.klima.ph.

Based on the CTTC fact sheet, the electronic database will be open to the general public and will serve as a hub of adequate and integrated information on how to save the environment through alternative transport technologies and practices.

The government is also pushing the use of alternative transport fuels that will not only serve to help save the environment but also help ease the country's dependence on imported fuels.

The Department of Energy is pushing for the mandatory use of a 25-percent ethanol blend with gasoline by 2010.

According to the DOE's updated Philippine Energy Plan (PEP), all local oil firms would be mandated to sell gasoline blended with at least 25 percent of ethanol in their service stations by 2010.

The government is also pushing the use of coco methyl ester (CME) as a diesel blend.

Several years down the line, between 2006 and 2014, President Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier said that CME use would become a nationwide mandate, taking the use of CME-blended diesel outside of government firms and into the realm of the everyday diesel vehicle-using public.

The nationwide mandatory use of a 1-percent to 5-percent CME blend should drive down imported fuel dependency by 3 percent, she said. *Abigail L. Ho*

NTC threatens to sanction Globe

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission has threatened to sanction Globe Telecom Inc. for falsely assuring subscribers that its special fixed-line rate would be offered on a permanent basis when the NTC only approved it for 30 days.

A Jan. 14 NTC order allowed Globe's wholly-owned Innove Communications Inc. to offer its toll-free national direct dialing services for a period not exceeding 30 days upon the receipt of the memo.

The Commission also allowed Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. to continue with its Plan 200 until Jan. 31.

"The Commission issued a memo to Innove dated Jan. 20 asking it to explain in writing why they came up with an advertisement saying that it is offering the NDD rates on a permanent basis," said NTC chair Ronald Solis.

He stressed that the NTC had not yet approved Innove's promo dubbed as "one country, one rate." The company's plugs, Solis said, constitute false advertising.

"If Innove's explanation is not satisfactory, then we can impose sanctions," said Solis. "Their ads are not in consonance with what we allowed them to do. Our 30-day approval was just for a promo basis and not permanent."

Solis said the commission had asked telecom companies to submit a position paper to help the NTC come up with a decision as to whether major players have engaged in predatory landline pricing at the expense of smaller operators.

The regulator said it was also evaluating existing promos and plans, which could lead to the scrapping of programs offering unlimited calls and even text for a fixed fee.

Solis said that while the Commission supports the lowering of telecom rates to benefit the public, it must also guard against ruinous competition that would prevent smaller players from operating.

Meralco works out 2nd tranche of ₱30-B refund

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER getting the Energy Regulatory Commission's approval for it to implement the first tranche of the fourth phase of its P30-billion refund scheme, the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. is now exploring other options on how to implement the second tranche of the customer rebate.

While sticking to its earlier options of crediting the refunds to customers' future bills and issuing zero coupon "refund notes," Meralco board director Christian Monsod said the company was also looking at the option of issuing postdated checks to customers entitled to refunds under the second tranche of phase 4.

"That should be decided in the next few months," Monsod said. "But it seems that, based on earlier consultations, the plurality prefers the refund to be credited to future bills."

Meralco is now preparing to implement the fourth and last phase of a Supreme Court-mandated refund for overcharges from November 1994 to April 2003.

The last phase, which covers commercial and industrial clients, is the costliest among all the refund phases as this involves some P18.6 billion, more than 60 percent of the total refundable amount.

After releasing its order for Meralco's implementation of the first tranche of the last phase of the refund scheme, the ERC is now ordering the power distributor to submit its proposal for the second tranche of the fourth phase of the refund.

Meralco had earlier proposed that the second tranche of the refund scheme's fourth phase be implemented in two ways: either to have the amount credited to future bills or have the amount come in the form of "refund notes" or zero coupon bonds with a maturity of 63 months.

At present, Monsod said the company was willing to explore other options for this tranche.

The postdated check scheme was just one option, he added.

While preparing its proposal for the second tranche of the refund's fourth phase, Meralco is also awaiting a Bureau of Internal Revenue order that will map out the process of its being a withholding agent for taxes to be slapped on customers entitled to rebates under phase 4.

As the BIR informed Meralco that it would have to be a withholding agent for taxes due to customers who would be entitled to refunds, Monsod said a specific order would have to come from the BIR for the refund to be implemented.

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A book entitled "Infanta: Passage to the Pacific," published by BPI Foundation together with the Doña Isabel Garcia y Fernandez Trust Fund, and a CD of an original song, "Alaala Ka, Infanta," will go to donors of the flood victims there.

The book shows a town that deserves to be restored and rehabilitated. Authors include Conrad de Quiros, Ciel Habito, Fr. Francis Lucas, Babeth Lolarga, Annie Feleo, Mickey Fenix Makabenta and Art Cariaga. Outstanding photos are by Emil Davocol and Rey Lazo. The song is by Noel Cabangon.

BPI Foundation Executive Director Roni Tapia-Merk will course the donations through Fr. Lucas, president of the Infanta Integrated Community Development Assistance Inc. (ICDAI) and president of the Catholic Media Network.

A copy of the book and a CD will be given free for every P3,000.00 cash donation. Individuals, office colleagues or families may choose to pool their donations to entitle them to the book and CD.

This campaign is supported by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer.*

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ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY MISTADES

It's the National Arts Month again—against all odds

THE ARTS and culture may have the least priority in the government's budget and the lawmakers' pork barrel. But they continue to thrive against all odds, which should be evident when the nation marks the Arts Month next month.

Organized by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the 2005 Arts Month will have the theme, "Sining Gising: Crafting Identities for Social Transportation." It will formally open on Sunday, Jan. 30, at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Rajah Sulayman Park, Roxas Blvd., Malate, Manila.

Perhaps the most unique program of this year's National Arts Month is the weekly flag ceremony in Malacañang throughout February which will feature cultural and artistic performances. President Macapagal-Arroyo will lead the flag-raising.

Banner

The banner projects of the Arts Month are:

Sayaw Pinoy. A nationwide concert of various dance forms to be participated in by at least five dance groups, three from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, and two from Metro Manila. There will also be a forum to tackle the various concerns of the dance sector.

Environmental planning. A two-part series of episodes/documentaries on environmental planning, explaining the nature and importance of the art and science of environment planning. It will feature interviews with the leading environmental planners of the country and the communities that have been environmentally planned and built, its problems, solutions and benefits.

TextPinoy. A nationwide poetry writing contest utilizing short messaging service (SMS), popularly known as texting. This is the third sequel to the successful 2003 and 2004 National Arts Month projects—the TextTanaga and Dionatext. Now as then, the contest seeks to utilize the mobile phone technology in the creation and promotion of different Philippine traditional poetic forms. For its third year, the contest will showcase the various regional forms—Sawikain (Tagalog), Tigsik (Bikol), Pagtakun (Waray) and Tigmo (Cebu). With the assistance of Globe.

Cinema Paraiso 3. A festival of mainstream and non-mainstream Filipino films focused on the convergence of technologies and new ways of looking at cinema. There will also be an exhibit of multimedia, multi-art installation.

Web Gising. A digital art contest that will challenge artists to explore electronic technology in art-making.

National Theater Festival. A harvest of Filipino theater productions. It will consist of original plays by professional, community and school theater groups nationwide.

Bamboo Music Festival. A five-day festival of lectures, workshops and performances by performing groups from around the country at the Folk Arts Theater. It will showcase varied repertoire of bamboo musical traditions in the country. Musicologists, musicians and experts will present their findings as well as conduct workshops on the materials, techniques, styles, origins, history,

IT'S THE NATIONAL/ C4

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo to lead weekly Arts Month observance in Malacañang flag ceremony.

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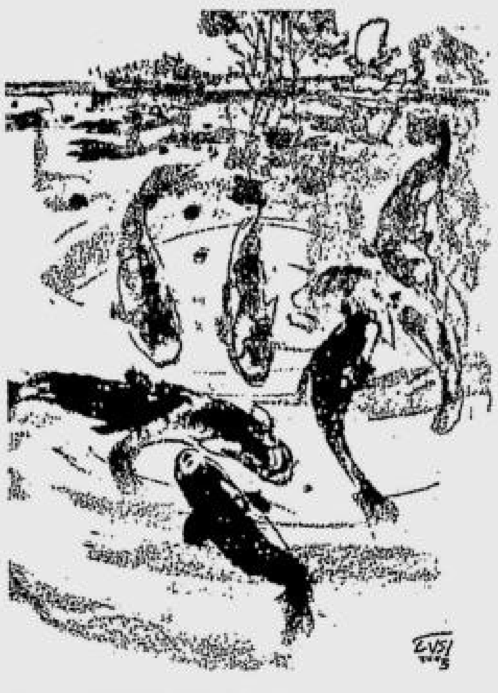
Rafael Cusi promotes black and white paintings in a book and a series of exhibits

Art in black and white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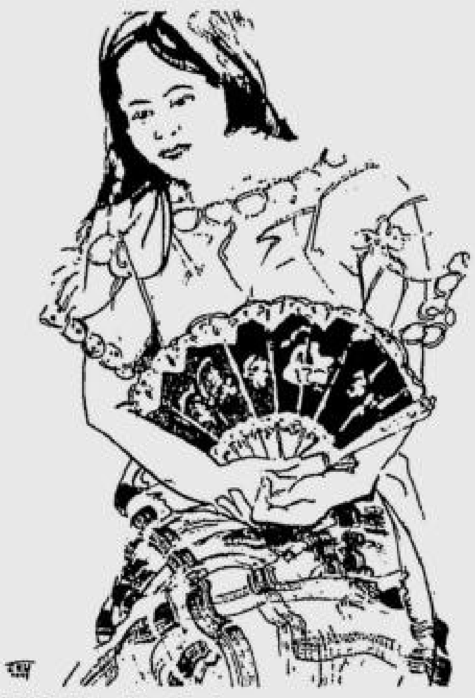
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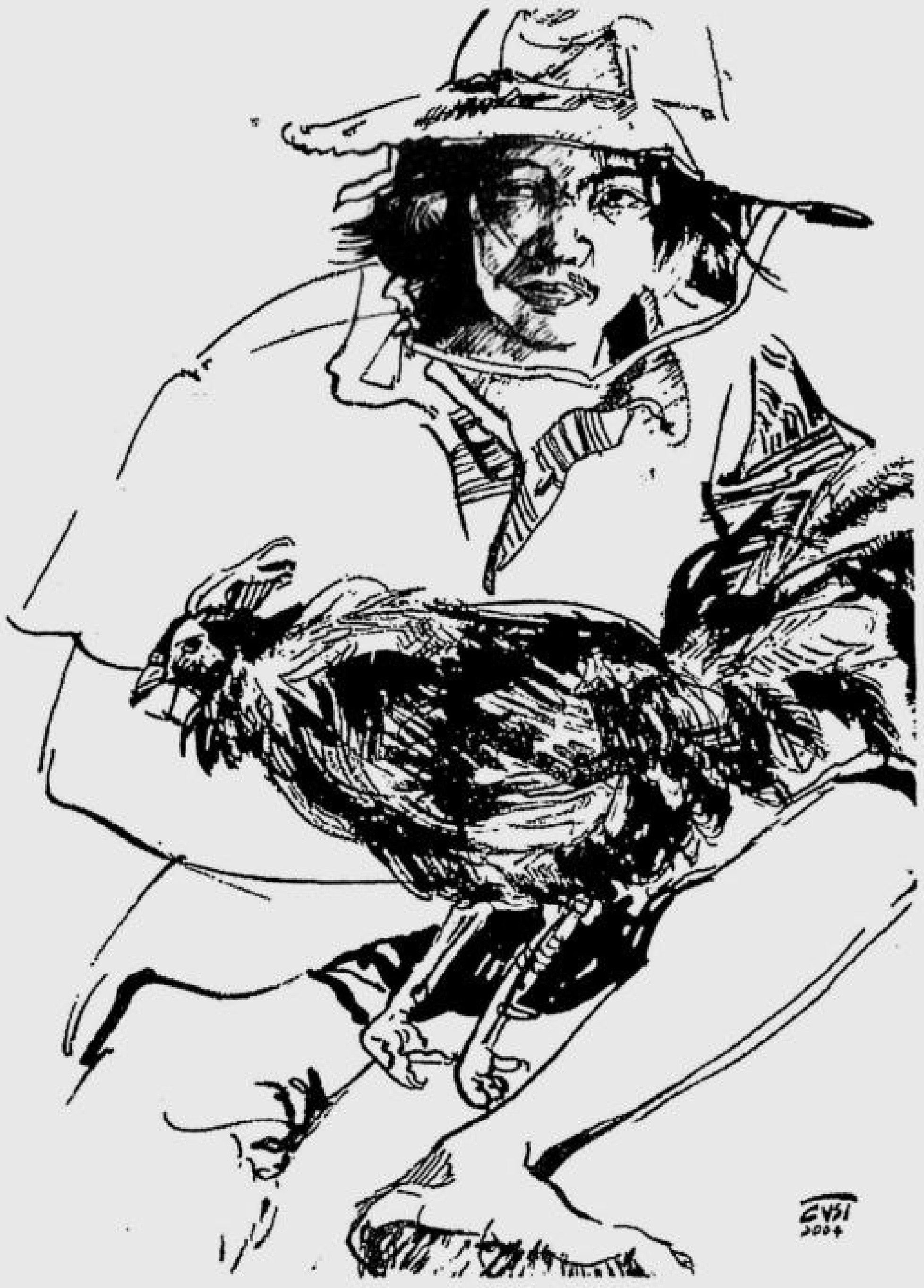
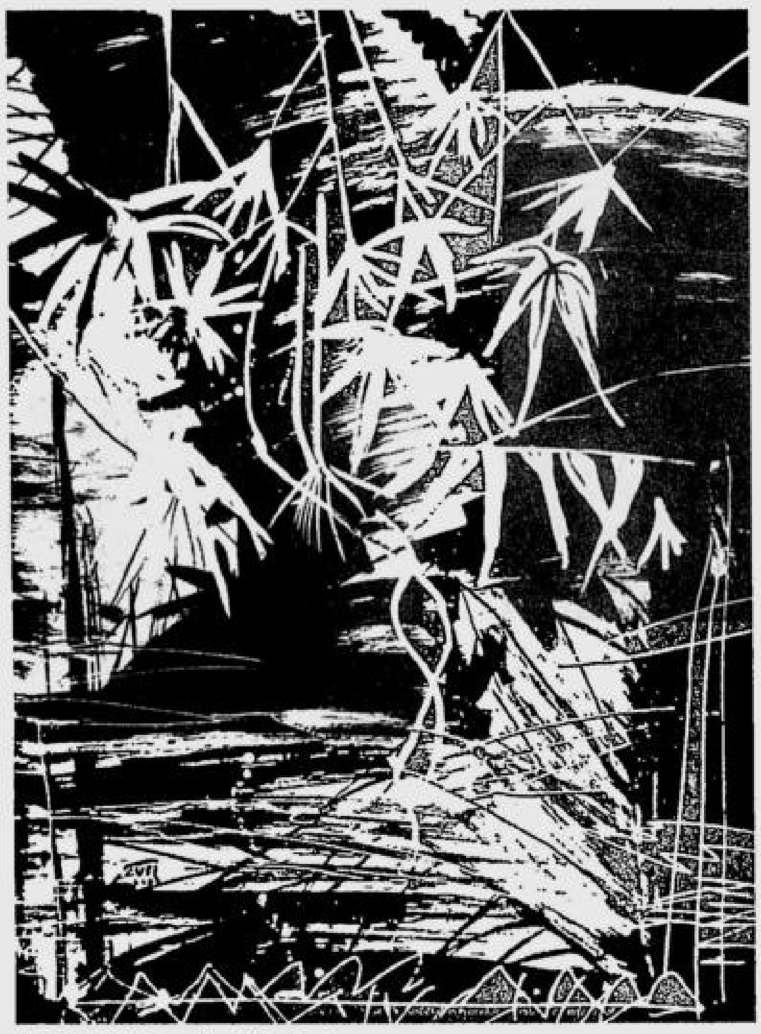

"SABUNGERO" Brush and Ink by Cusi


"FORTUNE Bamboo" by Cusi

IN "YIN and Yang," artist Rafael Cusi and publisher Marlene Aguilar combine to make a book featuring a unique collection of black-and-white paintings. The book seeks to capture life and vivacity despite the absence of colors.

The paintings in the book will be exhibited in two shows next month ahead of the release of the book. The shows are organized by Dr. Ramon Navallo and Armando Giron. The first will be at Acropolis North, Maharlika Hi-way, Sumacab Estate, Cabanatuan City on Feb. 5. The second will take place at Gallery A, 100-C Boni Ave., Mandaluyong City on Feb. 12.

"Black and white is extremely challenging," Cusi said. "Just like with watercolor, every stroke is final. There is no room for error. You need more imagination to capture the essence of the subject and to create drama because there are no colors for you to play with. It is an expertise that cannot be achieved overnight."

Admittedly, the market for ink on canvas paintings is highly limited, which is why the Mindoro-born artist preferred to keep the body of work he has been putting together since 1970, fresh out of school from the College of Fine Arts of the Philippine Women's University. It was only when Aguilar thought of publishing a book of black-and-white works that Cusi, who is more known as a top watercolorist, showed her his secret paintings.

"At a time when watercolor was considered a minor medium, I completely stopped painting in oil and acrylic just to prove a point: that the medium is only as grand or as insignificant as the gift of the hand that wields the brush. This is the same message I wish to relate through painting in ink—that there is unlimited power, integrity and poetry in black and white if you have mastered your medium well."

RAFAEL Cusi and Marlene Aguilar

Cusi and Aguilar first worked together in the 1997 coffee-table book, "The Philippine Coral Reefs in Watercolor." Endorsed by the United Nations and the Smithsonian Institute, the book received the European Art for Environment Award.

"We wanted to cut our teeth into something more challenging, something that hasn't been done before," said Aguilar. "That is exactly what this project offers—the opportunity to hurdle something that is difficult but ultimately rewarding."

Aguilar said ink on canvas can be a very tricky medium. "Without the necessary depth and intelligence, there is a tendency for a black-and-white painting to look like caricature straight out of a comic book. It needs a high level of maturity and artistry to capture the soul of your subject when dealing with this unforgiving medium."

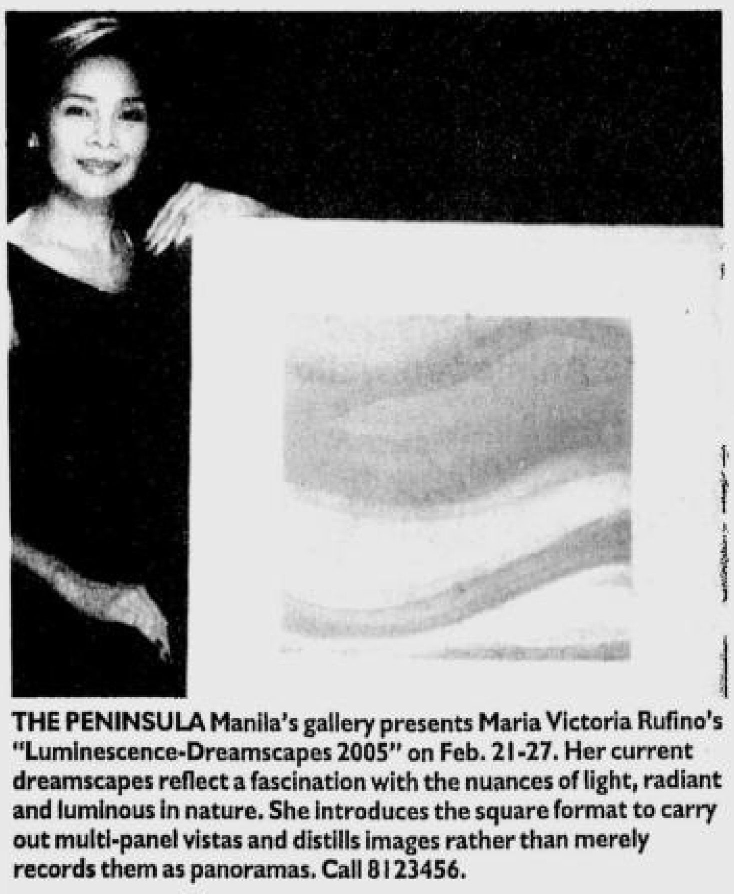
As publisher, she also hopes to generate enough interest for black-and-white paintings in the Philippines. "Black and white painting, for me, is art in its purest form. If there's no market for it right now, then we'll create it."

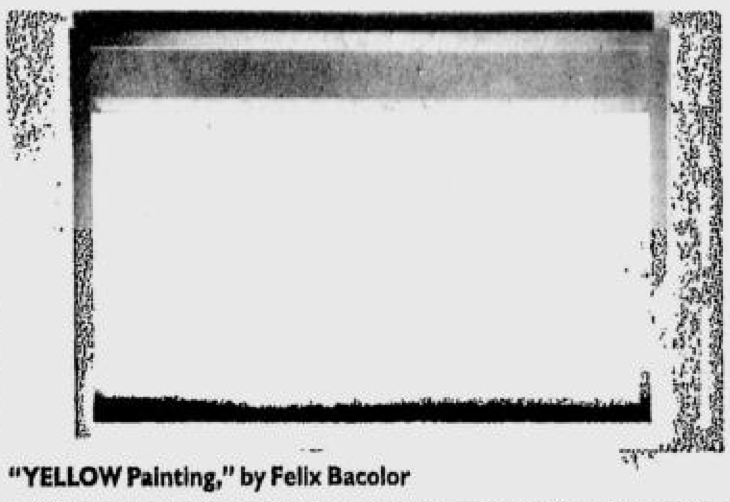
Cusi said his work is inspired by the ancient art of calligraphy, where beauty in all its power and grace is captured with every steady stroke from a master's brush. Having lived and worked in key cities of Europe and North America, Cusi learned all that he could from Western art, only to come home with an even greater desire to explore his Eastern roots and instill its values in his art.

The book will be released middle of 2005. Call Armando Giron at 0917-8456692 or Marlene Aguilar at 0918-5886270.

Bacolor at West, Medina at Finale, Rufino at Peninsula

VISUAL ARTS


THE PENINSULA Manila's gallery presents Maria Victoria Rufino's "Luminescence-Dreamscapes 2005" on Feb. 21-27. Her current dreamscapes reflect a fascination with the nuances of light, radiant and luminous in nature. She introduces the square format to carry out multi-panel vistas and distills images rather than merely records them as panoramas. Call 8123456.


"YELLOW Painting," by Felix Bacolor

WEST GALLERY showcases Felix Bacolor's "Paintings" on Jan. 27-Feb. 10 at the Artwalk, level 4, Megamall A. In this show, the artist uses one-foot high box frames to highlight a spectrum of color, as if the exhibit walls were one big, large-scale palette. Call 6341284.

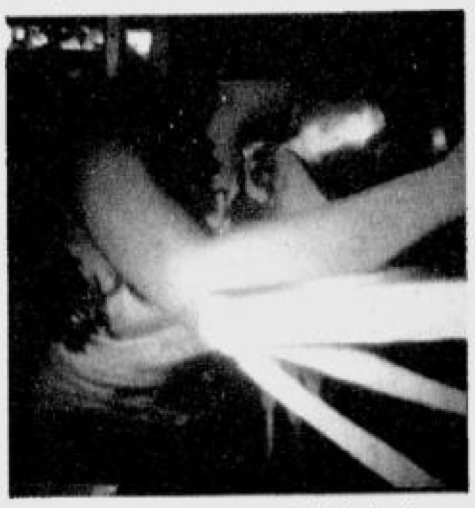
DENNIS Montera opens his latest exhibit "Consciousness" on Feb. 4-20 at the Art Center, located at the second level of SM City Cebu. The collection consists of abstract paintings reflecting the artist's own sensations, thoughts, images, feelings, memory, attention and artistic processes. Call (032) 2319851.

THE LES C'BEIGE Gallery features the artworks of Rene Quiroz and Editha Mata Guerrero. The gallery is a non-profit Christian ministry which aims to grant financial assistance to mission activities of different Churches worldwide. Les C'Beige is located at 21st St., United Parañaque Subdivision 5, Sucat, Parañaque. Log on to www.lcbeige.nu.

ART INFORMAL launches workshops for children and adults from January to March. Children's workshops in drawing and acrylic painting will be facilitated by Pamela Yan Santos starting Feb. 5. Advanced oil painting techniques workshop by Jose Santos III is offered beginning Feb. 12. A creativity workshop by Jojo Ballo will start Feb. 9. Art Informal is located at 277 Connecticut St., East Greenhills, Mandaluyong. Call 7258518.

TAM P. Austria, artist and author of "Recreamindoism Rena Philosophy," recently hosted an art forum dubbed "Usapan sa Antipolo." Photo shows (from left) Austria; Remy Boquiren, president, Sikat Group; Dr. Jimmy Capco, president of Kulay Marikina Group; Lydia Velasco, president, Marikina Saturday Guild; and Chona Lozano, executive assistant of the Office of the Chairman, Commission on Appointments.

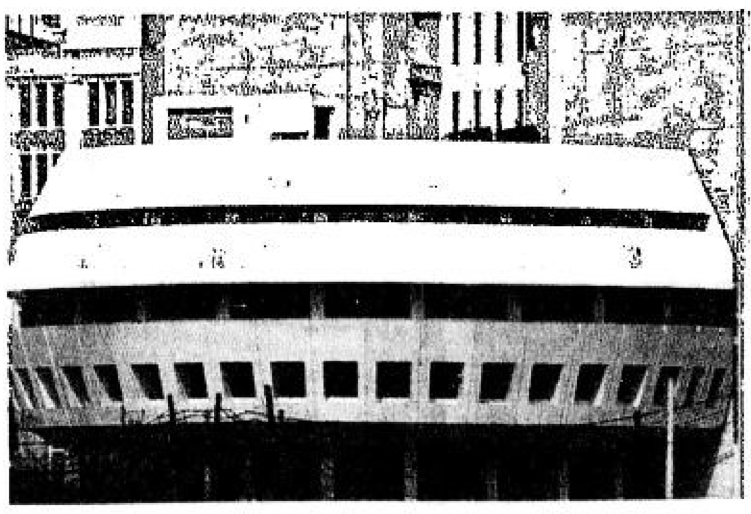
PHILIPPINE Comedy King Dolphy at the opening night exhibit of Steve Santos at West Gallery, 4/L, SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong. Exhibit runs until Jan. 25.


FINALE ART File features Lui Medina's "Slit" on Jan. 27-Feb. 10 at level 4, Megamall A. The show mounts 8 oil on canvas paintings of abstracted images of people shown as pieces of flesh from obscure angles in a voyeuristic manner.

José María Zaragoza, unappreciated architect

PRIDE OF PLACE
Augusto F. Villalon

A WELCOME addition to the extremely limited bibliography on Philippine architecture, the monograph, "José María V. Zaragoza: Architecture for God and Man," reintroduces an unappreciated architect who practiced during a forgotten period in Philippine history.



A PLAYFUL "gateway" to the power district of Manila in the 1960s, Zaragoza's semi-circular building architecturally turns the corner from the foot of Jones Bridge leading to the Escolta. EDWIN OBCEMEA

In the monographh, Rubén D. F. Defeo and Ma. Lourdes Zaragoza Banson trace Zaragoza's professional achievements and personal philosophy developed during his career starting in 1938 and ending with his death in 1994. Archival images document his work. Recent photographs by Edwin Obcema record surviving Zaragoza architecture.

For years only Spanish colonial structures were considered as the narrow focus of Philippine architectural heritage. Today interest has slowly expanded to include the heritage of the American colonial period, although little appreciation exists for the architecture of the recent past and its significance to Philippine cultural development.

The monograph is one of the first to correct that oversight. It is hoped it will inspire other writers and scholars to bring the past back into light.

Lost period

The last 50 years are a lost period in the collective Philippine memory. The immediate postward period were momentous years, resulting in the halcyon days of political and economic stability of pre-Marcos Philippines.

It was a stimulating time. Asia recognized the Philippines as a regional leader whose quality of life ranked next to that of Japan. We were certainly no backwater country then.

The Philippines was the only totally Asian country blending Philippine, Spanish and American influences, drawing visitors from neighboring countries who traveled to Manila for infusions of its multi-cultural milieu so evident in the unique lifestyle of the city and reflected in its architecture.

It was said that at that time that Manila, especially the sweeping seaside vista of Dewey (now Roxas) Boulevard, manifested a distinct visual identity unlike any other cityscape in Asia, a cityscape more attuned to the Latino seaside boulevards of Rio de Janeiro in sight and feel.

It is within this context that the architecture of Zaragoza should be viewed.

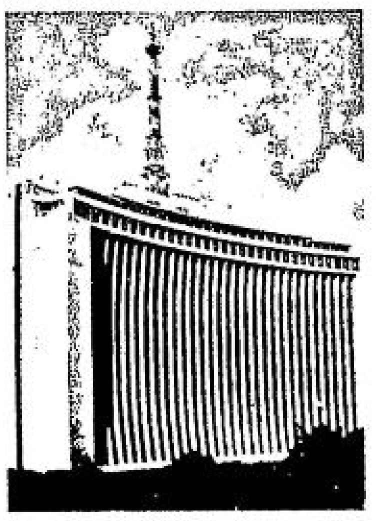
Zaragoza graduated from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila in 1936, passing the licensure examinations in 1938 to become the 82nd architect of the Philippines.

Early in his career he initiated a vigorous personal correspondence with the great Frank Lloyd Wright, culminating with a visit to the master's Arizona atelier in 1956. However, unlike his contemporaries who looked towards the United States for inspiration, Zaragoza found his in Europe and Latin America. That influence set him apart.

Zaragoza, a deeply religious man, earned a diploma in liturgical art and architecture from the International Institute of Liturgical Catholic churches in Rome. The religious structures completed during his career are Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Tala (1950), Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City (1954), Villa San Miguel in Mandaluyong (1954), Pius XII Center in Manila (1958), and finally, the controversial expansion of Quiapo Church (1984).

After a study of his accomplishments, Zaragoza emerges as an unnoticed figure worthy of deeper study in the protracted search for that elusive "Filipino Architecture."

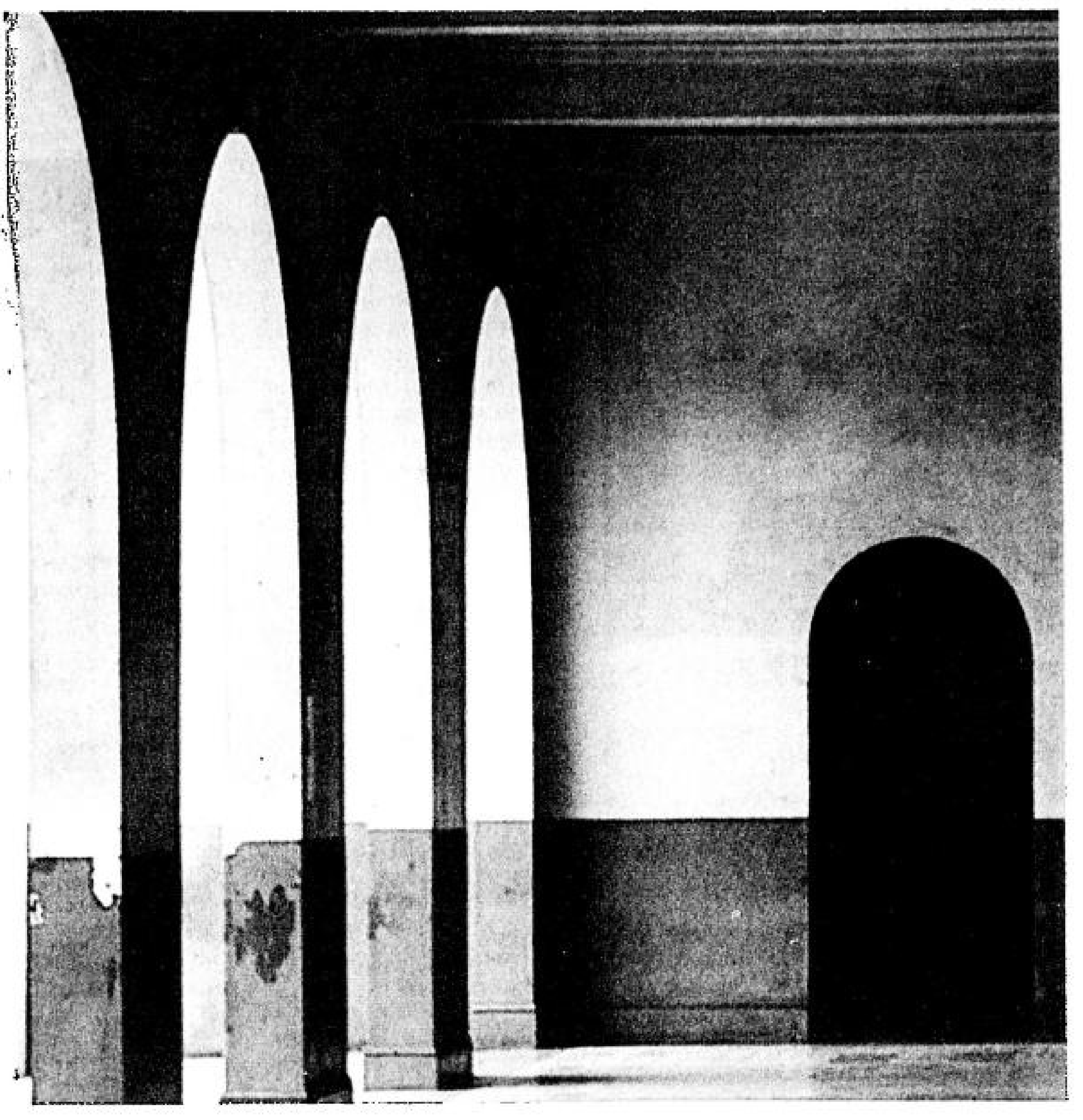
The builder of the Santo Domingo Church, Casino Espanol and Spanish style residences developed his own vision of 'Philippine architecture'



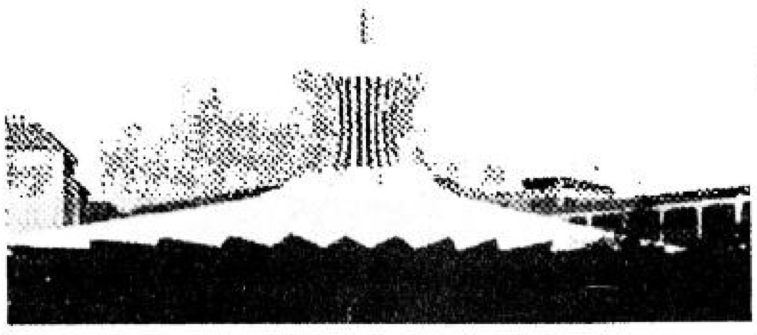
VERTICAL concrete fins shade the Meralco Building interiors from direct sunlight while the concave shape adds a subtle elegance to the facade.

Grounded in Philippine architectural vocabulary, he distilled traditional forms derived from the Spanish colonial era into the simplified, unornamented shapes of the International Style of the 1950s.

The arcades of the Santo Domingo Church Convent in Quezon City is classic 1950s Zaragoza architecture: simple, unornamented, modern but serenely elegant, evoking all of the familiar visual reminders of old Spanish colonial cathedrals in the Philippines without its baroque trappings.



ARCHES in the Santo Domingo Church cloister in Quezon City reinterpret Spanish colonial architecture in the undecorated style of post-war 1954, a powerful but still unappreciated example of modern Philippine architecture. EDWIN OBCEMEA



THE INFLUENCE of Zaragoza's collaboration with Brazilian architects Niemeyer and Costa is evident in the folded concrete plates that crown Union Church in Makati (constructed 1975, now demolished).

Strong impact

The strong impact of Zaragoza on Philippine houses is likewise unrecognized. His designs develop the visual framework for the popular "Spanish style" of architecture favored in residences of the 1950s and '60s.

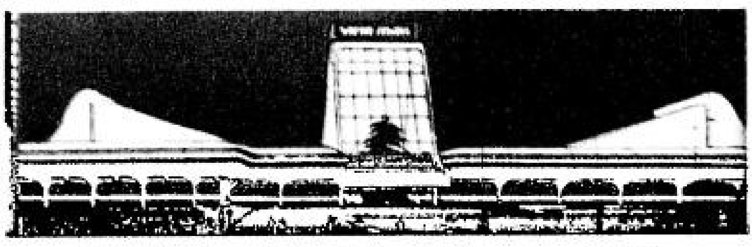
Although no such style exists in Spain, the genre was called "Spanish style" in Philippine residential architecture, best illustrated in Zaragoza's 1951 Casino Español de Manila that still survives in excellent condition on San Luis St. between Taft Avenue and San Marcelino in central Manila.

The Casino Español features a series of interior courtyards framed with arcaded loggias, arched door and window openings. Terra cotta tile frames the edges of low-pitched roofs. Heavily varnished wooden beams support sloping interior ceilings. In the rooms are red cement tile floors and plain painted concrete walls.

This was the prototype of houses built during the era, many of which still survive today. It was residential architecture so appropriate to the pulse of the time that reflected the Spanish-influenced roots of the Philippine lifestyle that was lost when the era ended.

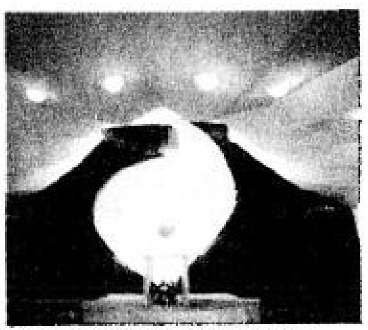
In 1960 the internationally eminent Brazilian architects Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa invited Zaragoza to be among the guest architects participating in the massive project of designing Brasilia, the new capital for Brazil.

The Latino imprint on Zaragoza was indelible.



ARCHITECTURAL rendering of Virra Mall (constructed 1975, demolished 2005) demostrates the Latino-influenced lyricism of Zaragoza's architecture that successfully combines form with function.

His post-Brazil work, notably the façades of the Meralco Center on Ortigas Avenue and Philbanking Building in Port Area (both built in 1965) and the Commercial Bank and Trust Company Building in Escolta, Manila (1969) insinuate the subtle flowing Latino lines of Brazilian architecture.



SCULPTURAL forms cast in concrete float the ceiling skywards at the Don Bosco Church in Makati (1977). EDWIN OBCEMEA

Evoking Niemeyer's cathedral in Brasilia, Zaragoza crowns Union Church in Makati (built 1975, now demolished) with a crown of folded concrete plates.

He follows the tradition of South American architecture of exploiting the exuberant plasticity of concrete to construct flowing, sculptural designs for Virra Mall in Greenhills (built 1975, demolished January 2005), Saint John Bosco Parish Church in Makati (1977) and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Shrine in Sucat, Parañaque (1979).

In the time line charting the development of Philippine architecture, the contributions by Zaragoza are unrecorded. This monograph is the first step at documenting those contributions and in making architects; educators, historians and the public aware of José María V. Zaragoza and his place in that forgotten period of Philippine history.

Published by ArtPostAsia, "José María V. Zaragoza, Architecture for God, For Man," is available at Fully Booked in Power Plant Mall, Makati. Proceeds will benefit a Zaragoza family housing project for the needy. Contact publications@artpostasia.com

E-mail your feedback to afvillalon@hotmail.com

Painting the landscape within

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

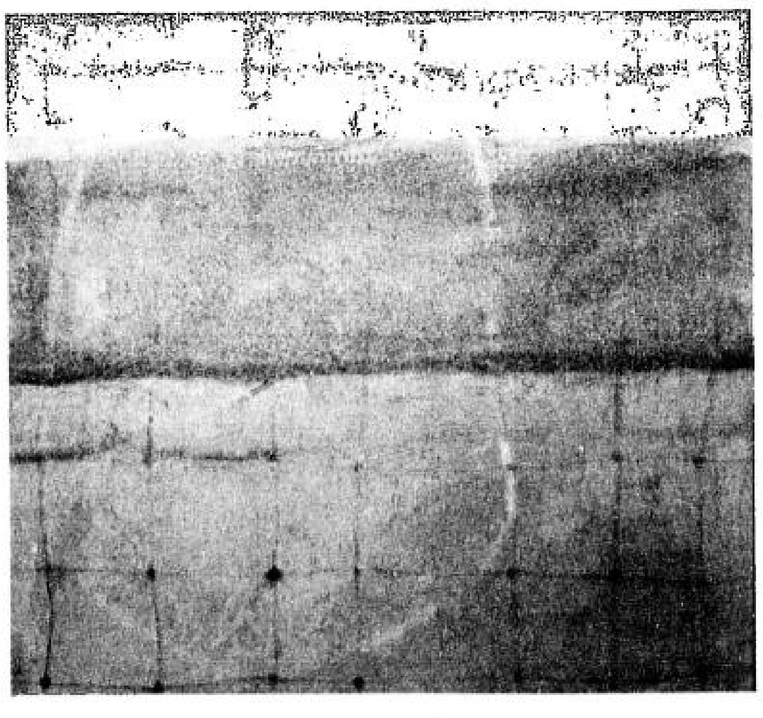
THE LANDSCAPE genre has evolved. Though artists tend to make use of landscapes to bring out the inherent beauty of creation, there are artists who incorporate their own beliefs and values, not to mention their style, into the genre.

One artist who has spent a good deal traveling across continents and adapting to changing climes and time zones is the 25-year-old Rodel Tapaya-Garcia, grand prize winner of the 2001 Nokia Arts Awards, which have regrettably been suspended.

As part of his prize, the artist was able to go for further art training to the Parsons School of Design in New York and the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland.

He held a solo exhibit, "Balangkas," at the Boston Gallery last year, and took part in numerous group shows, including the "Gamit" group show at the Vargas Museum and the "Danas: Sinsin" show at the CCP Small Gallery, with Lino Acasio, Saudi Ahmad and John Frank Sabado, also last year.

In "Recent Paintings," (Big & Small Gallery, SM Megamall, until Jan.22), Garcia proves the award he won when he was 20 was no fluke. Once more, he returns to his personal turf of landscapes, mainly by way of maps, using graphs and grids, as well as lines, textures and colors.



"RED Trends I"

Eschewing the rigid representation of landscapes, the artist is evidently more obsessed now with both the expanse (as in the horizon) and the depth (the earth's layers). But it is the element of texture that rekindles memory, since most of the works have been encrusted with generous layers of paint molded and shaped to resemble the earth's crust, suggesting the very act of unraveling the past.

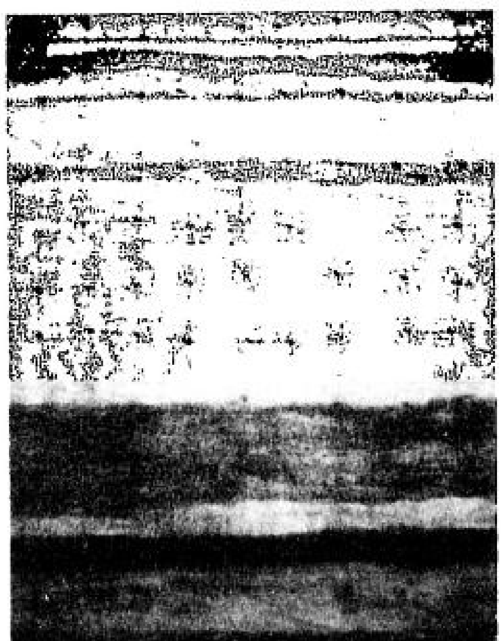
Provocative

The most provocative work is the "Landscape Series," made up of 25 identically-sized pieces, measuring 8" x 8," and which has been mounted, rather, scattered around the gallery walls. These relatively smallish works may not have the scope and impact of the artist's larger works, also mounted as groupings, like mix-and-match pieces, but they are no less intriguing as they tease the eye and the mind.

The colors of the landscapes are far from the usual kind of lushness, as they are closer to the earth's hues. Presumably, too, the artist has taken a more expansive view of the map than sheer botanical greenery, and, given the present state of the earth, it is a planet constantly bedeviled by nature's own wrath.

The artist, true to being an astute visualizer himself, has ensured that the spontaneous and the accidental have an equal role to play, together with the horizontal-vertical interplay, which is cleverly articulated by textures here and there, seductively orchestrated by the embedded burlap at the fringes of the canvas.

The artist has, from the start, been obsessed with the grid, as in his Nokia-winning "Deconstruction," in which the structure of the chess board coincided with the Filipino's overarching need for high-tech gadgets (think mobile phones and laptops). In the current show, the grid assumes the dominant image, subsuming the elements lying beneath it.



"HORIZON at Night"

His recent works amply prove that an artist can continue to deepen and broaden his perspective of the world, retaining the child's precocious sense of wonder fueled by an imagination that reconnects the personal to the global.

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

Parade, street dance, concert to open 2005 Arts Month

MONIQUE Wilson

NOLYN Cabahug

THE NATIONAL Arts Month 2005 will open on Jan. 30 with a parade at 4:30 p.m. from the Cultural Center of the Philippines to the Rajah Sulayman Park on Roxas Blvd., where a concert will be held at 6.

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) with Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and the Cultural Center of the Philippines organized the launching.

Participating in the parade and street dance are the winners of the Caracole Festival of Makati City under Mayor Jejomar Binay, Tanghalang Bagong Sibol of Malabon under Mayor Canuto Senen Oreta, Labandero Festival of Mandaluyong under Mayor Neptali Gonzales Jr., the winner of the Rehiyon-Rehiyon Festival of Marikina under Mayor Marides Carlos-Fernando, the Manila Band, and the Philippine Navy Band.

To perform on the streets are seven Manila public schools, the Kababaihan Ng Maynila, Youth Ng Maynila and others.

The concert will see performances by the: Quezon City Ballet of the Halili Cruz School of Ballet, University of the East (UE) Dance Troupe, Philippine Normal University Kislap Sining, Lyceum Dance Troupe, UE Chorale, UE Band, University of Santo Tomas (UST) Wind Orchestra, Lahing Kayumanggi, Kasarinlan Philippine Ensemble, Muntilupa Dance Troupe under Mayor Jaime Fresnedi and Vice-Mayor Aldrin San Pedro, St. Scholastica's High School Chorale, University of the Philippines Dance Company, Manila Dance Scholars, Earthsavers, Letran Dance Troupe, Mitch Valdez, Nolyn Cabahug, Monique Wilson, Chin Chin Guitierez, Cocoy Laurel, Domingo Landicho and Regina Medina.

Kim Atienza will emcee the concert. Annie Luis and Eury Zulueta will anchor the parade.

The launching-closing committee is led by Gener Caringal as project director and Shirley Halili Cruz as artistic director, with Marichu Tellano, Alvin Morales and Ferdie Isleta as members.

CECIL Guidote-Alvarez

COCOY Laurel

CHIN CHIN Gutierrez

MITCH Valdes

It's the National Arts Month again ...

From page C1

ethnography, cultural contexts, playing techniques, instrument-making and other aspects of the bamboo musical tradition.

Pelikula at Lipunan. A nationwide film festival that features restored or found Filipino films, short films, and documentaries. For this year, there will be the "Tribute to Cebuano Cinema," "Tribute to the King of Philippine Movies: Femando Poe, Jr.," and the launching of "The Child Friendly Cinema." Venues: Jan. 26-28, SM City Cebu, Cebu City; Feb. 15-17, SM City Iloilo, Iloilo City; and Feb. 23-27, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong.

National Artist on Radio. This is a daily month-long program popularizing the literary works of National Artists F. Sionil Jose, Nick Joaquin, and Alejandro Roces. Monday to Friday, 9:30 p.m., dzRH.

Arts Month Features in the Seat of Government. There will be performances and exhibits every Monday during the flag-raising ceremony at Malacañang with President Macapagal-Arroyo. There will also be art and heritage exhibits at the Supreme Court, House of Representatives and Senate.

For information about the 2005 National Arts Month, call 5272192 locals 612-615. E-mail info@ncca.gov.ph.

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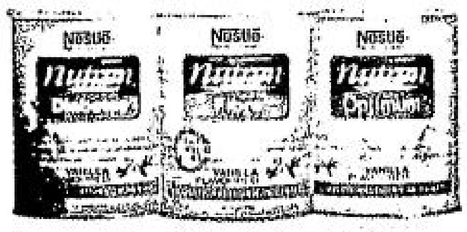

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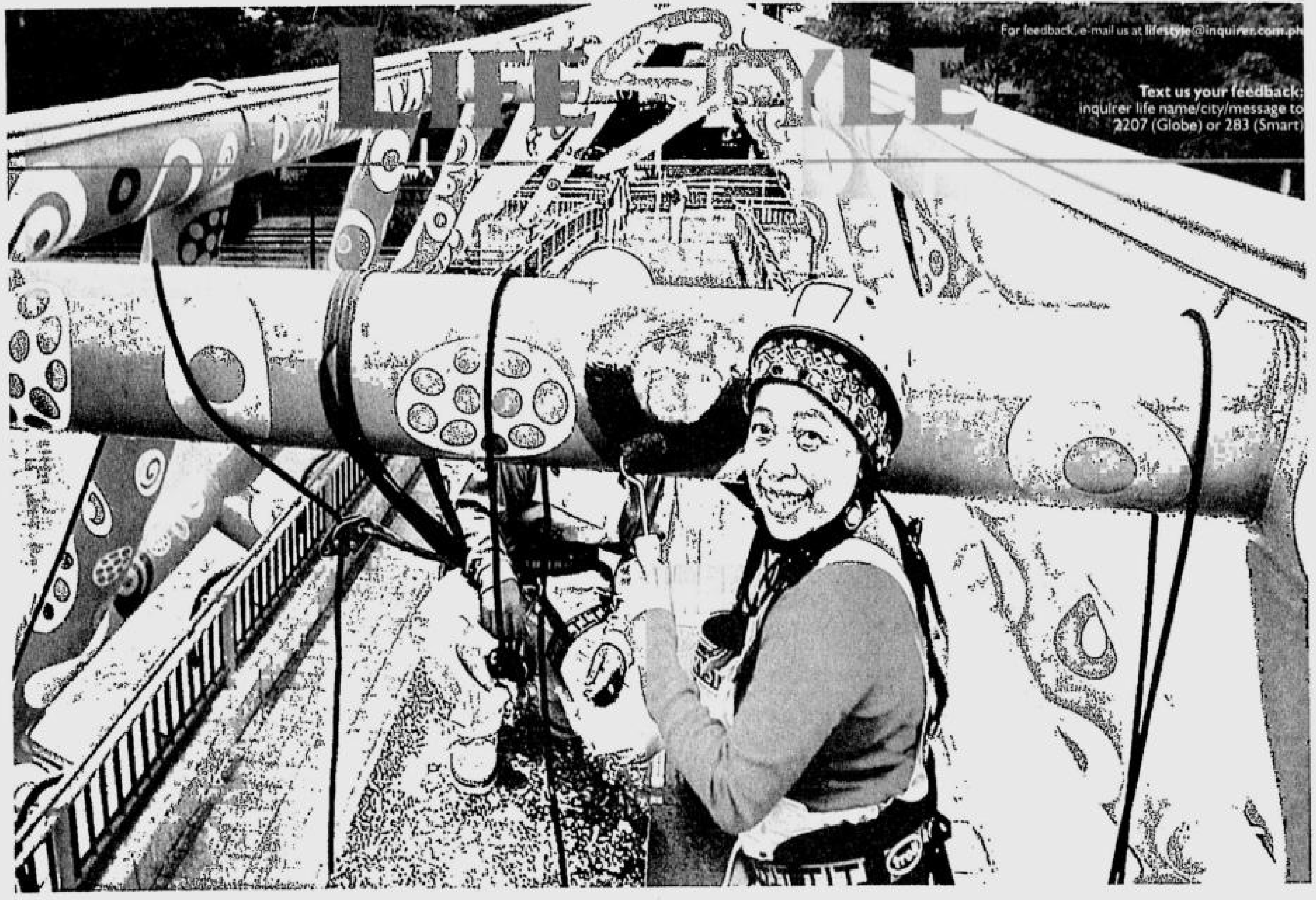

THE LATE artist struggled against cancer to finish painting Singapore's Alkaff Bridge.

Closing Pacita Abad's circle of wanderlust

Though seriously ill, she magically transformed the battleship-gray bridge into a stunning outdoor sculpture in incandescent hues

Text by Constantino C. Tejero
Photos by August dela Cruz

IN A BURST of orange, yellow and red, Corazón Alvina sashayed down the stage and modeled her technicolor dreamcoat inspired by the art of Pacita Abad. Then the Philippine National Museum director delivered a lecture on "the artist who painted the globe."

The 5th Helenica Foundation Lecture to Honor a Filipina Visual Artist was one of the highlights of "Parangal for Pacita Abad," held recently at the Ateneo de Manila University, 40 days after Abad's death from lung cancer in Singapore.

The tribute was presented by the Ateneo Library of Women's Writings (Aliww), an archival program for the personal papers of creative Filipino women, particularly writers and visual artists. Emceed by Aliww member Felice Prudente Sta. Maria, it also marked the program's 10th anniversary.

Joyful remembrances were offered by Ian Findlay-Brown, Asian Art News chief editor and Abad's biographer. He particularly remembered the artist's extraordinary kindness, even to those who had been unkind to her.

DepEd Sec. Florencio Abad said his sister, who took up Political Science at UP, had intended to proceed to law school and was being groomed in politics by their parents, who were representatives of their home province Batanes. She was among the UP activists battling with the Marcos administration.

"We had no inkling she would become an artist," he continued. "She never showed any inclination to art—well, of course, except for her mini skirt, big bangles, and sometimes colorful nails... So when she held her first show in the country, in what is now Dusit Hotel, we were asking ourselves, Where did she get that?"

Energy and inspiration

But the real question might well be, "Where did she get the energy?"

Abad's husband, American investment banker Jack Garrity, recalled the journeys she took with him across five continents through 31 years, working in over 80 countries, producing over 3,500 artworks in materials ranging from canvas and paper to bark cloth, metal, ceramics and glass.

The woman was indefatigable even in her last few years, when she was seriously ill. She had shown him her calendar for 2005 and it was filled with shows and activities.

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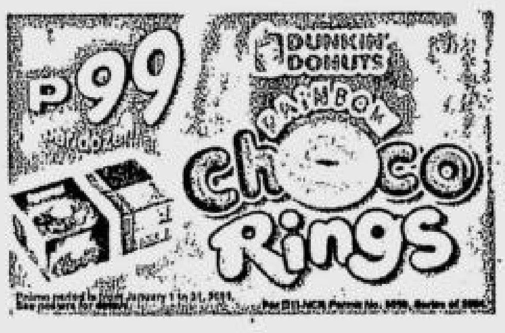
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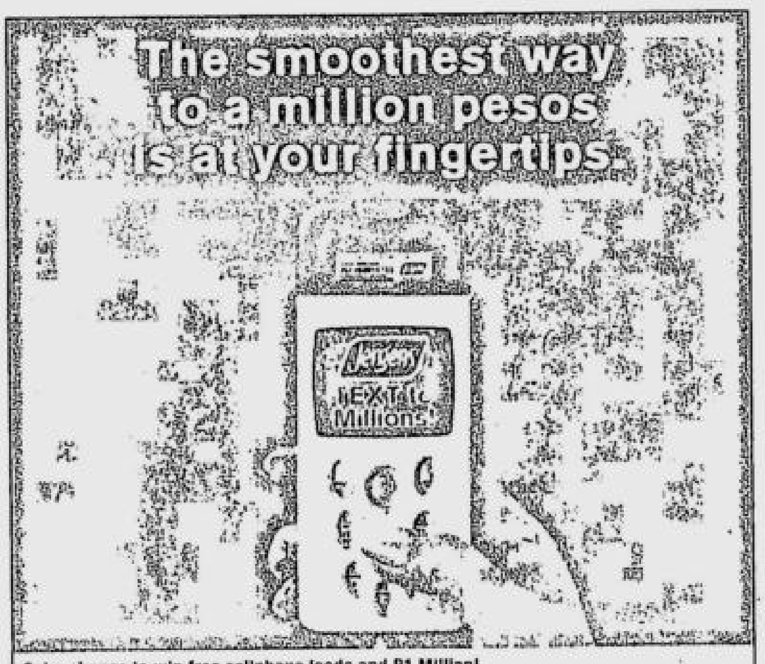
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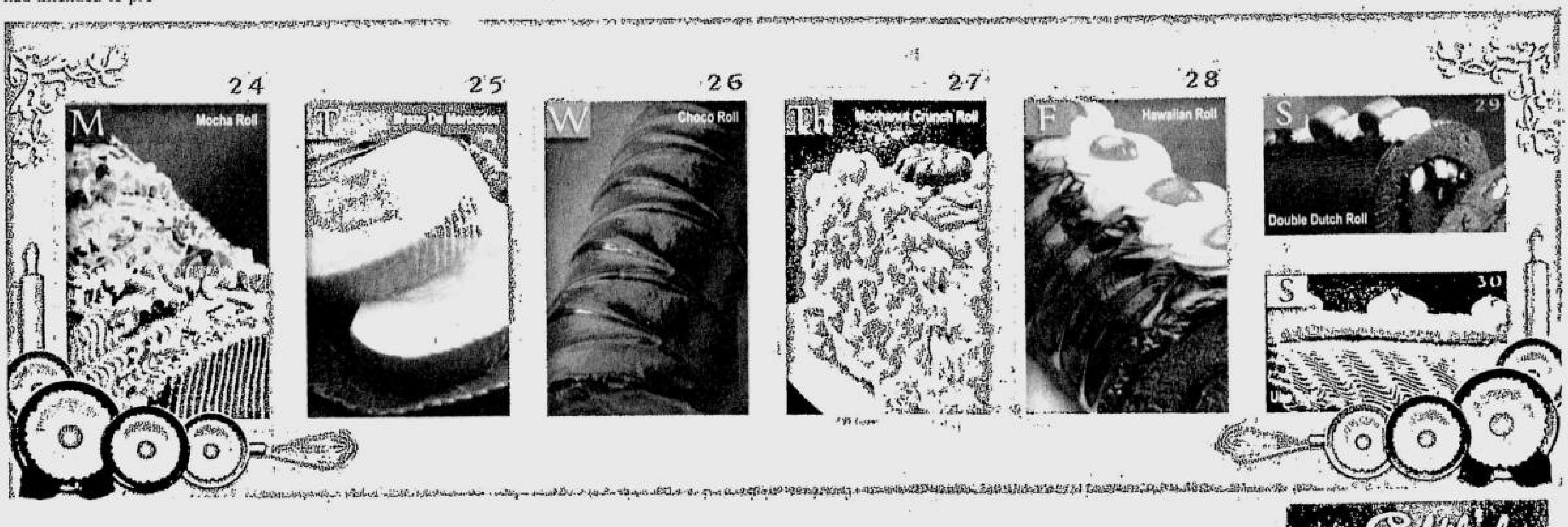
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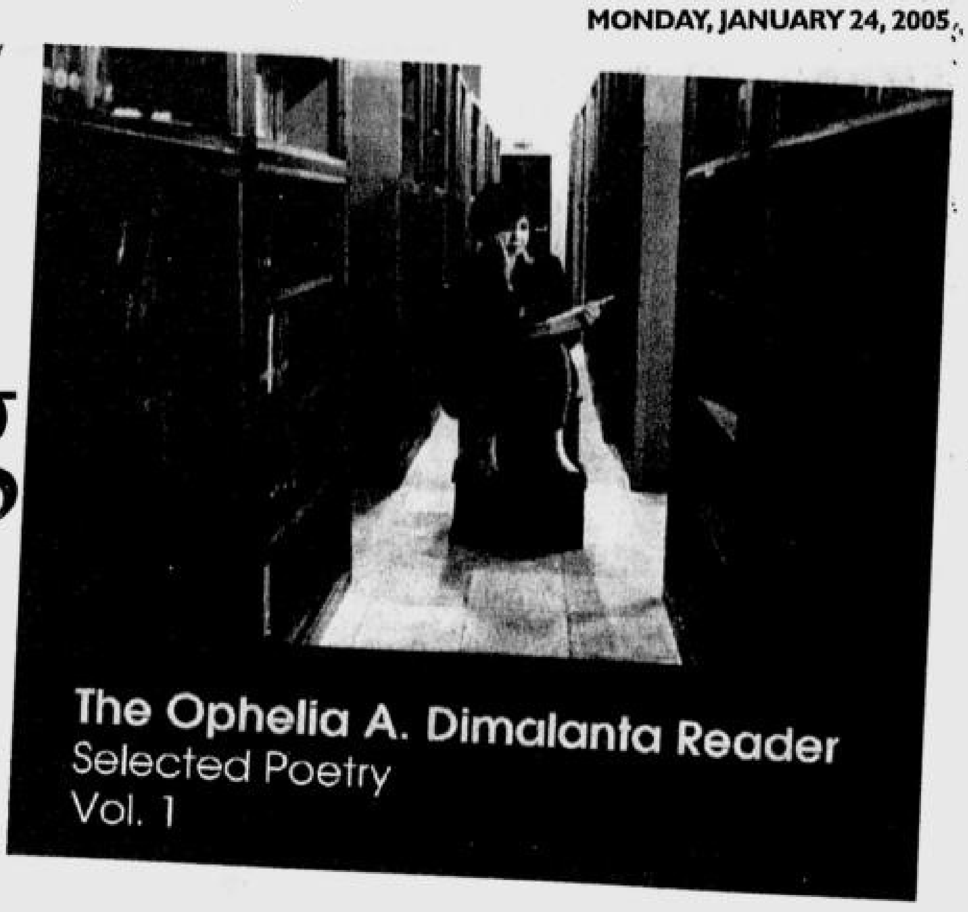
One blazing poetic burning

By Ralph Semino Galán
Contributor



A LIVING writer who has devoted nearly an entire lifetime to the service of the Muses certainly deserves a retrospective compilation of the substantial body of work s/he has produced thus far. Such is the case of "The Ophelia A. Dimalanta Reader: Selected Poetry" (UST Publishing Hous, 2004, 264 pages), the literary matriarch's two-book series of her poems, short stories and essays, as well as the academic attention given to her oeuvre by top critics.

The first volume collates the best pieces from her six previous poetry collections, most of which have been published by the Pontifical University's press: "Montage" (1974), "The Time Factor and Other Poems" (1983), "Flowing On" (1988), "Lady Polyester: Poems Past and Present" (1993), "Love Woman" (1998) and "Passional: New Poems and Some Translations" (2002).

Meticulously selected by the grand poetess herself, the poems in the present compendium represent not only her personal favorites, but what she feels/thinks are the most significant of her verse compositions. Having done his undergraduate thesis on Dimalanta's first four collections, this critic could not help but agree with almost all of her choices.

Included in this personal anthology are the poems about being a woman in all her complexity from "Montage," the transcendental travel pieces from "The Time Factor," more transit poetry and four feminist dramatic monologues from "Flowing On," the Iowa-inspired verses from "Lady Polyester," the Mediterranean lyrics and centennial poems celebrating seven women revolutionaries from "Love Woman," as well as her spiritual/erotic musings from "Passional."

But what is interesting about the book is the way the poems are arranged, for they are not sequenced in chronological order. Instead, the selected pieces are grouped together into five sections based on common leitmotifs: "1. On Poetry, Poetics, Poets, and Music, 2. On Faiths Romantic and Transcendent, 3. On Life, Death, and the Hovering In-between, 4. Montage: The Different Images of Woman, and 5. Journeys: Persons, Places, Sites and In-sites."

The first part presents her personal poetics, her own definition(s) of what her versifying is all about, as well as paeans to exemplary writers, musicians and visual artists. For new readers of Dimalanta's masterpieces, the three overtly ars poetica poems are perfect take-off points for a better appreciation of her brand of poetry: "And poetry can only claim/ or disavow so much like love,/ its rantings beclouding what has/ finally been uttered or not,/ ineffable as dawn's too soon/ tiptoeing fingers…a smile/ that never gets to the lips.//" ["What Poetry Does Not Say"], "This strange stasis/ This something else apart/ An instant of vision/ Throat-lumps turned truths/ Bled into being//" ["Poeisis: A Making"], For that plain, unfrilled face of truth,/ For what is big and terrible, grim/ And painful and beautiful, way beyond/ Pain's range, like love's quietus.// [Poet in Search of a Tragic Theme].

Most memorable lyrics

The second section contains some of her most memorable and mesmerizing lyrics, like "The Time Factor," "A Kind of Burning," "Out of the Mouths of Babes," "Finder Loser," "Mayflower Pilgrims," "Romancing the Lake," "Love in a Contemporary Key," "Surreal Loves 1 and 2" and "Passional," to name a few. "Stowaway Love," a relatively unknown poem except for those who are avid followers of Dimalanta's poetry, is an excellent companion piece to the more popular "A Kind of Burning": "this far, strange,/ i still catch/ the sound and sense/ of your every emerging thought/.... like one stowaway love,/ into the burning din/ of this kind of dying.//"

The selections in the third part constellate around existence and extinction, as well as the experiences in between. The most significant of these pieces have the crumbling/burning house as its central metaphor, a catastrophe that did occur in August 1991. "On a House About to Crumble" and "She Must Have to Go and Soon" anticipates the actual destruction of the said edifice in some sort of poetic prophesy, while "An Unobstructed View" and "One Final Burning" transmute the tragedy into poetic experience, thus transcending it.

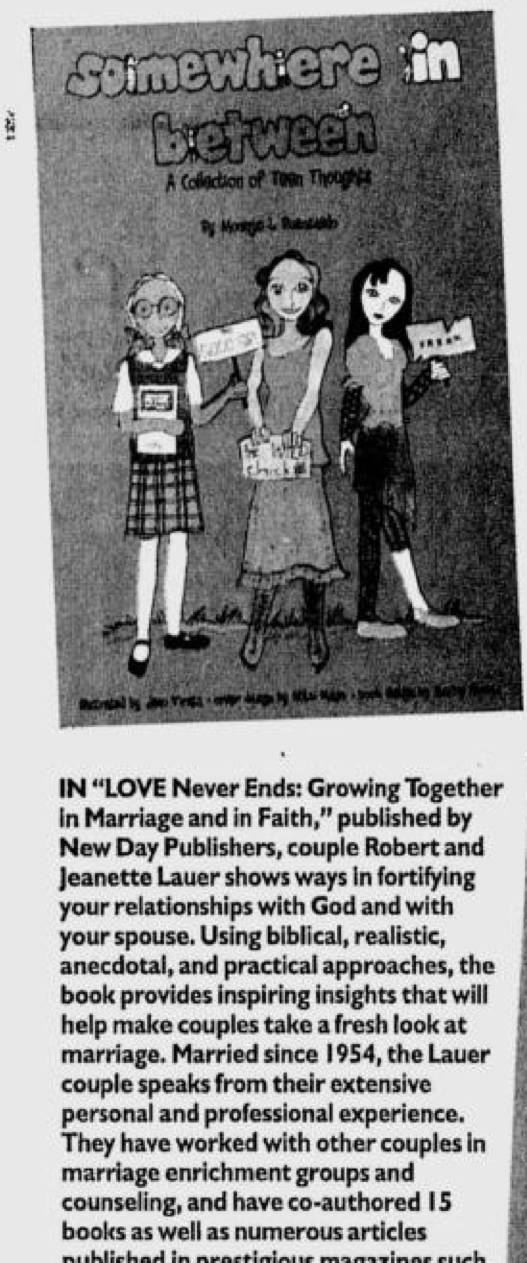
Images and imaginings of womanhood dominate the fourth section. Ranging from the feminine and the feminist to the true female, the poems celebrate the multifarious and multiple aspects of the female identity. "Montage," "Amarantha," "Rat Story 1 and 2," and "Love Woman" depict the many faces of Eve as "complex, questioning/…elemental, prevailing.//" On the other hand, the joys and sorrows of motherhood are textualized in "Quickening," "Birth," "Children and Lovers," "Coming to Grief," and "Sons and Mothers." A series of feminist dramatic monologues and character sketches are presented in two subsections titled "Our Voices Our Zones" and "Other Voices Other Zones," respectively.

The last and longest part proffers travel poetry at its best. "Coasts Apart" describes the style of her journeying: "I get terribly entrapped/ in safety belts and contraptions/ tangling with camera and straps/ and postcards and homeborne deals.//" In terms of description and design, wit and wisdom, the truly gratifying pieces are "Pale Thoughts Upon a Pale City," "On a Slow Boat to Bohol," "He Rages," "Nara," "Sunbathing at Malibu," "Flowing On," "The Heart of Waiting," "Flowing in with Eyes of Fire in Carmel by the Sea, October 1987," "The Parthenon Seen and Shot from Hotel Aphrodite," and "At the Foot of the Sphinx," among others.

Dimalanta's idiolect has remained inimitable all these years. Her mode of expression is extraordinary, in the sense that nobody else but her can get away with juxtaposing latinate polysyllabic words and anglo-saxon monosyllables with such ease and aplomb. The verve of her versifying has not diminished, despite the wear and tear of her countless quotidian tasks, like running UST's Center for Creative Writing and Studies, as well as heading the Humanities Division and the Creative Writing Program of the UST Graduate School.

"The Ophelia A. Dimalanta Reader: Selected Poetry" will be launched Jan. 26 at 5 p.m. at the Chiang-Ching Kuo for Intercultural Studies (5/F Central Library, UST campus, Manila. It is open to the public. The book is available at Solidaridad Bookstore and other major bookshops. For orders, call the UST Publishing House, 7313522 or 4061611 loc. 8252 or 8278.

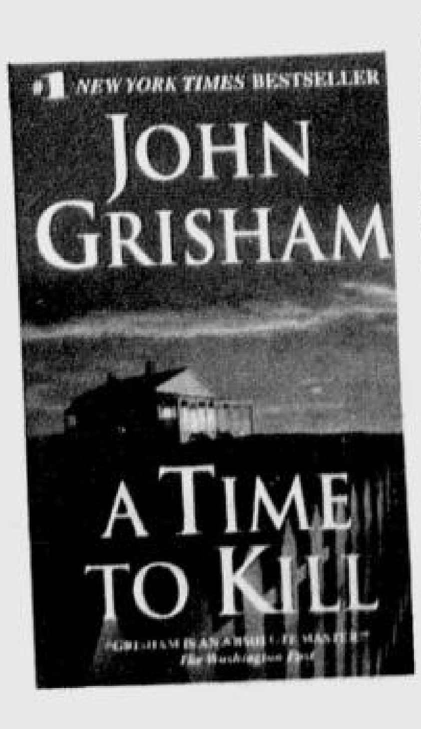
Top poetess Ophelia Dimalanta will launch her collected poetry volume on Jan. 26



THE TEEN years are difficult: coping with raging hormones, pimples and facial hair, and struggles against pressure from parents, siblings, *barkada* and teachers. All these are tackled in the coming-of-age book by promising writer Monique L. Buensalido, "Somewhere in Between." "Teenagers are no longer children but not yet full-blown adults. While going through the normal teenage things they do, they are also trying to discover who they are," writes Buensalido in the book's introduction. Monique is taking up Communications Technology Management at the Ateneo de Manila University. She also won first prize in the Kabataan Essay Category in the 2003 Carlos Palanca Awards.

IN "LOVE Never Ends: Growing Together in Marriage and in Faith," published by New Day Publishers, couple Robert and Jeanette Lauer shows ways in fortifying your relationships with God and with your spouse. Using biblical, realistic, anecdotal, and practical approaches, the book provides inspiring insights that will help make couples take a fresh look at marriage. Married since 1954, the Lauer couple speaks from their extensive personal and professional experience. They have worked with other couples in marriage enrichment groups and counseling, and have co-authored 15 books as well as numerous articles published in prestigious magazines such as Psychology Today, Ladies' Home Journal and Reader's Digest. Call 9288046 or 9275982, or email newdayorders@edsamail.com.ph.

LOVE Never Ends
GROWING TOGETHER IN MARRIAGE AND FAITH
ROBERT H. LAUER / JEANETTE C. LAUE

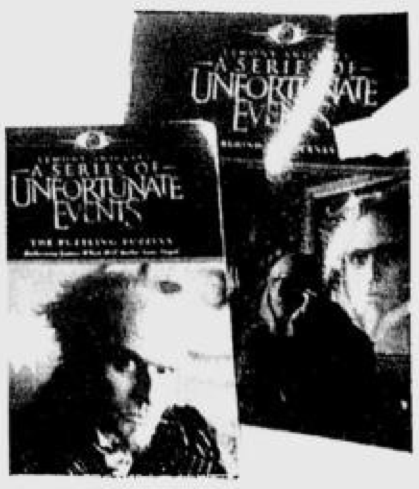


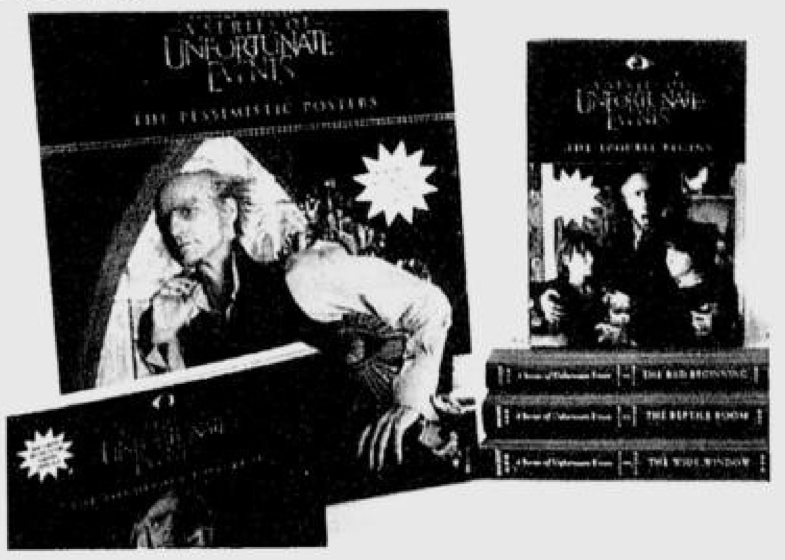
JOHN Grisham, whose name is synonymous with the modern legal thriller, is PowerBooks' author of the month. At present, there are more than 60 million printed copies of his books worldwide, which have also been translated into 29 languages, making him one of the most successful authors of the '90s. Among his most famous works are "The Firm," "A Time to Kill," "The Client," "The Pelican Brief," "The Chamber," "Skipping Christmas" and "The Last Juror." Of his 17 books, eight have been adapted for the big screen. "The Client" was later made into a television show. His latest book, "The Broker," tells the tale of Joel Backman, a notorious Washington power broker who received a controversial last-minute pardon from the president, who in turn had been pressured by the CIA. Grisham practiced law for almost a decade in Mississippi, specializing in criminal and civil law, before turning to writing. PowerBooks Specialty Store has branches at Greenbelt 4 (7576428/29), Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang (8505662 to 63), and Glorietta (7527075).

'A Series of Unfortunate Events' now available

HARPER-COLLINS and National Book Store presents the celebrated trilogy by Lemony Snicket, "A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning (Book the First)," "The Reptile Room (Book the Second)," and "The Wide Window (Book the Third)."

These wonderfully crafted hardbound books, skillfully illustrated by Brett Helquist, tell us of the woeful misfortunes and staggering struggles of the Baudelaire orphans: the inventive and witty Violet, the bookish and intelligent Klaus, and the infant who loves to bite, Sunny.





The ill fortunes of the Baudelaire orphans started when a tragic fire consumed everything they owned, their fine mansion and, worst of all, their beloved parents. Now without the comfort, love and shelter of their fabulous lifestyle, they grapple with the harsh realities of life and with many villainous characters, particularly Count Olaf.

The Baudelaire orphans will soon be on the big screen through the United International Pictures film starring Jim Carrey as Count Olaf. Harper-Collins has published "The Ponderous Postcards," "The Pessimistic Posters," "Behind the Scenes with Count Olaf," and "The Puzzling Puzzles," charming books are adorned with pictures from the movie.

Power events for January

POWERBOOKS Specialty Store will hold the seminar, "Change Management Techniques," on Jan. 27, 1:30-5:30 p.m. Call Grace del Rosario (tel. 6315052) for inquiries.

Meanwhile, get to know how you can help those in need during your free time. Hands On Manila invites everyone to attend its volunteer orientation on Jan. 26, 6 p.m. at Powerbooks Megamall. Call 8437044.

Books 7 and 8 of "True Philippine Ghost Stories," published by Psicom Publishing, will be launched on Jan. 29, 2-6 p.m. at PowerBooks Greenbelt.

PowerBooks Specialty Store is a full-service specialty bookstore with branches at Greenbelt 4 (7576428/29), Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang (8505662 to 63), and Glorietta (7527075).

Theater festival for children

FOR ITS 37th theater season, Peta-Children's Theater Program and Metropolitan Teen Theater League, in cooperation with Terre des Hommes-Germany, Terre des Hommes-Netherlands, Church Development Service (EED) of Netherlands and the Intramuros Administration, are presenting "Dula-daluyan '05: Creating Through Play, Playing with the Arts!," a four-day Festival of Children and Youth, on Feb. 3-6 in various performance and activity venues in Intramuros, Manila.

The festival aims to provide children and young people space for self-expression in light of their right to leisure, play, recreation and cultural development. The event also offers opportunities to hone their craft as young artists and present these to audiences such as their peers and the public at large.

More than a thousand youth and children delegates representing Peta-MTTL's network of 30 Luzon-based teen theater groups and CTP's six partner organizations of children's theater groups nationwide will be present throughout the festival. They will participate in graduating workshops, art mart exhibits, fora, front acts and theater performances.

The festival is also open to other youth and children participants, as well as educators from Metro Manila for select short non-graduating art workshops and front acts, art exhibits and theater performances. Call 4100822 or 7249637.

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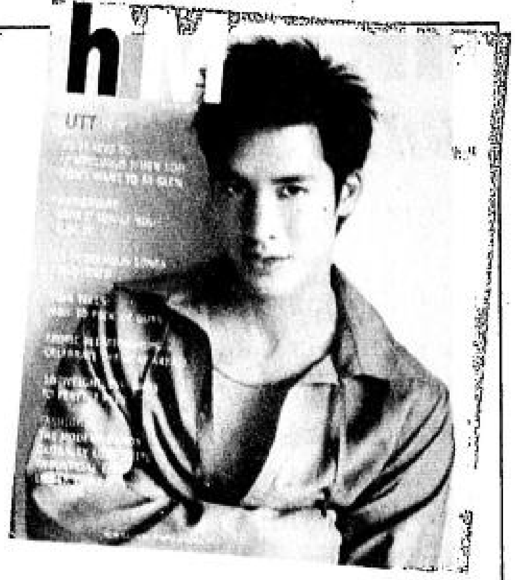
Men's mag with a twist



THAI heartthrob, MTV VJ Utt, is cover boy.

ABS-CBN Publishing, a leader in the glossy magazine industry, has launched hiM, a daring new concept in men's fashion and lifestyle.

While traditional glossy magazines have served female audiences, hiM reflects the global trend of gender convergence in fashion that magazines are beginning to pick up. hiM demonstrates men's growing comfort with their own vanity and interest in fashion and design.

The debut issue of the magazine features cutting-edge men's fashion layouts, the work of the country's top photographers and stylists. And it's a wide and very sophisticated mix. The magazine also features men in various modes of undress, including a fully exposed derriere.

This has caused controversy in some circles, but hiM's editors are unconcerned. After all, fashion is ultimately a celebration of the body.

FROM A FASHION story on elegant tropical suits in hiM Magazine

"In today's typical women's fashion magazine, there are many shots of nude or partially unclothed women, yet no one hangs lesbian labels on them. Why shouldn't men's magazines be just as comfortable with the body?", asks the mag's brand manager, Sandy Henson. "hiM is for people who like men, and that includes men who like themselves."

hiM also offers entertaining information, much of it penned by women, that is useful for adults of either gender, including tips on skincare, scents, how to deal with a hangover, classic recipes for household-word cocktails that may have been diluted over time.

There's a sex advice column by one "Eva" specifically on dealing with a male sexual partner, plus an erogenous chart of the male body illustrated with a double-page spread photo of a male nude.

"We address ourselves to a very modern audience," writes editor Carlo Tadiar in his editor's note. "Ambiguity is a fundamental aspect of this magazine. It's for people who are rather past strict labels."

hiM is available at leading bookstores and newsstands. Call 4152852.

Korean flutist in debut concert with MPO

KOREAN flutist Hae Won Shin will have her debut concert with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Rodel F. Colmenar on Jan. 28, 8 p.m., at Philamlife Theater, U.N. Avenue, Manila.

Hae Won Shin has performed in a number of concertos with the Bolshoi Orchestra of Russia, Bulgaria Concertante Orchestra, and Korean Symphony Orchestra.

In her performance with the Bolshoi Orchestra, the Moscow News said, "The dialogue of Hae Won Shin's flute with the orchestra was full of grace and charm."

Hae Won Shin graduated at the Juilliard School of Music and later went to Columbia University in New York where she obtained her Master Degree in Arts and Education. She also taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Music in Los Angeles.

The program includes "Danse Macabre," C. Saint-Saens; L'Arlessiene, G. Bizet; Carmen Fantasie on Themes from Bizet's "Carmen"; Francoise Borne L'Arlessiene, G. Bizet. Call 7051728, 7224274 or TicketWorld at 8919999.

Rare evening of contemporary works

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

THE PHILIPPINE Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) greeted Manila's music lovers with cacophonous sound in the fifth concert of its current season early this month.

The program primarily gave a Manila premiere to contemporary works by Korean and American composers. Together with the other parts, the program was heavily tilted toward the contemporary side.

All this made for an exciting, enjoyable evening—and a different aural experience. Rarely did a local audience have the opportunity to listen to contemporary works. It is about time they get exposed to this kind of music.

But if attendance was used to gauge acceptance of this genre, the many vacant seats sadly suggested that, in general, our listeners still preferred "traditional" music of the classical and romantic styles.

The concert opened with the work of Sukhi Kang (b. 1934), a respected, active contemporary composer of Korea. A compact work of three sections, "Dalha for Orchestra" is scored in the postmodern idiom, with traditional Korean music expertly hewn in contemporary style.

A celebratory mood was evoked by the warm sound of percussion instruments. Melody was etched in pentatonic scale and droning was vigorously resorted to. The ambience was truly Asian: light, horizontal and straightforward. Composer Kang stood up as conductor Eugene Castillo acknowledged him amid warm applause from the audience.

Josef Suk's "Fairy Tale Suite" was well received, judging from the hearty applause at the end. The audience somehow was able to relate to the romantic strains of this ballet music.

Conductor Castillo introduced it by way of annotation. Just before the last part was played, after the elegiac strains of the third part, he informed the audience that the final part stirringly brought back once more the love theme.

Indeed, the music was beguiling, and the rendition was sensitively done, including the solo violin passages played by concertmaster Nemesio Ibero Jr.

Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring," another suite, was rendered quite handsomely. It was light but meaty listening, enjoyable to the core as the orchestra played inspiringly.

PIANIST Aileen Chanco

One had a grand moment relishing the dashing ensemble playing. The clarinet warmly intoned the "Shaker Hymn," and the variations that followed were simply absorbing.

The more exciting moment for listening came with John Adams' piano concerto, "Century Rolls." California-based pianist Aileen Chanco was soloist. Bill Everett, her husband, a double-bassist, played with the orchestra.

Chanco was in close rapport with Castillo. The rendition was truly marvelous. Chanco sank her fingers into the keyboard, repeating some notes in a mechanical way that, in the words of the composer himself, rolled on forward in exciting rhythmic flow with biting brassiness, and jerky jazzy pulsations, until catchy bebop syncopation was reached at the end.

Truly, one enjoyed feeling the beat. And, indeed, there was so much to enjoy in a very relaxed manner in this concert, thanks to the innovative sense of programming of Castillo. Definitely, he knows the vocabulary of new music.

John Adams is a teacher of composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He is the most frequently played among living contemporary American composers.

At the Little Theater the following evening, Chanco showed her articulate brand of pianism in a solo recital that closed the fifth-anniversary celebration of Martin Lopez's Sinag Tala Foundation.

Her rendition of Mussorgky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" was electrifying. She etched the "Promenade" in varying moods as the music progressed, interestingly bringing out the essence of each picture being aurally depicted.

Listening pleasure intensified from the "Catacombae" until the end. It was a pity she was playing not on a grand piano but on a dull-sounding baby grand.

She struck lush tones in an unwavering rhythmic drive in "The Hut on Chicken's Legs" and did "The Great Gate of Kiev" with keen incisiveness and solid dispatch.

Completing the meaty program were Ginastera's Sonata No. 1, Op, 22, Debussy's "Images (First Set)," Liszt's Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, and Molina's "Malikmata."

Fil-Am pianist in town

Meanwhile, Lloyd Paguia Arriola, the son of Filipino immigrants in California and a holder of a doctorate degree from Juilliard School of Music, will give master-class recital at the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music on Jan. 26 at 3 p.m.

He's going to play Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 29, Op. 106, otherwise known as "The Hammerklavier Sonata," admittedly a war horse.

PPO conductor Eugene Castillo

Closing Pacita Abad's circle of wanderlust

MIRIAM president Patricia Licuanan and other guests in indigenous finery

CLAUDE Tayag views Abad works and memorabilia.

It was while she was starting on her monumental public art "Painted Bridge" that she found out from statistics that she couldn't last more than four weeks.

But she would have none of it. "I have a bridge to paint!" she exclaimed.

The herculean job, as recorded by Garrity in a book, involved: scraping off and cleaning the old paint of the 230-ton, 55-meter-long, 35-meter-high Alkaff Bridge at Robertson Quay across Singapore River; priming it with 120 liters of a white base coat; two coatings using 930 liters of six base colors; applying 2,350 circle stencils; hand-painting each circle stencil using 46 colors; and painting the railings with additional circles.

She had assistants, of course, but one could often find the sick woman harnessed to the bridge.

And so, while undergoing multiple treatments of radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery, she magically transformed the battleship-gray bridge into a stunning outdoor sculpture in incandescent hues of yellow, pink, red, apple-green, turquoise.

Homeland and shrine

"The biggest thing she gave me was her smile," Garrity concluded his speech in a cracked voice. "It basically lit up the room. When I have a problem, I just think of her smile, and my grimace turns into a smile."

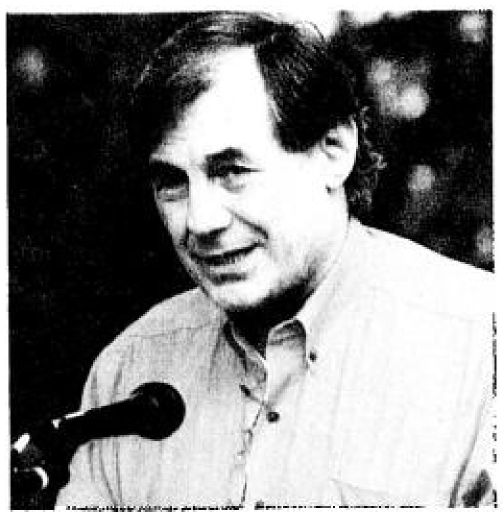
Afterwards, to the thrumming of tom-toms, the guests gathered under the trees for cocktail, in the dimming afternoon light. After an hour of chit-chat among friends and art lovers, they proceeded to nearby Rizal Library, in hushed tones, as if approaching a shrine.

At Pardo de Tavera Room on the second floor of the building, a selection of Abad's art, personal papers and memorabilia was presented by Aliww and Fundacíon Pacita. In a corner by the entrance, a TV monitor was playing the last interview with Abad, conducted by Sta. Maria on Sept. 3 last year.

The Pacita Abad Foundation aims to "support the development of committed painters, printmakers, sculptors and multi-media artists under the age of 40 from emerging Asian countries; and facilitate the study and understanding of Pacita Abad's artistic career."

It maintains a museum in Tukon, Batanes, where on a windswept hill overlooking the South China Sea the remains of the Ivatan gypsy artist now rest.

JACK Garrity, Pacita's husband

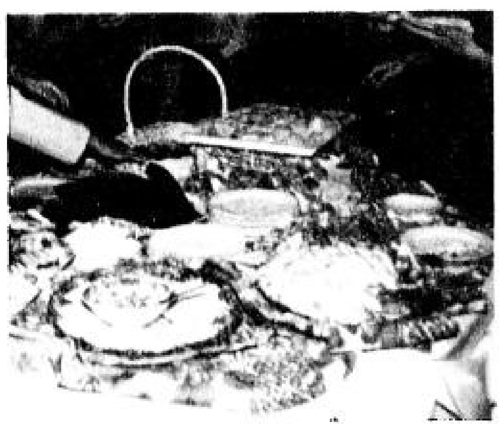


ART writer Ian Findlay-Brown

NATIONAL Museum's Cora Alvina

EDUCATION Secretary Florencio Abad

LED by Ateneo president Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, art lovers pay tribute to Pacita Abad at St. Thomas More Garden.



IVATAN-style *merienda*

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Plus, new approved applicants who have no existing Citibank credit card are given waived first year fees-that's savings of as much as P1,800!

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In the United States, the evolution from rewards points to redeem an assortment of items to cash rebate features reflects a growing demand for the latter. To date, over 35% of credit cards in the US now offer cash rebates.

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So if you're on the hunt for a credit card, look no further than the Citibank Cash Back Card. It's loaded with great features plus cash back rebates that make for a truly rewarding shopping experience.

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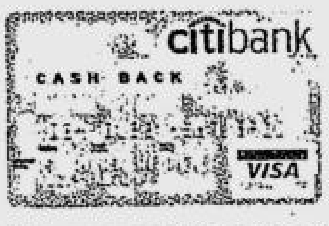

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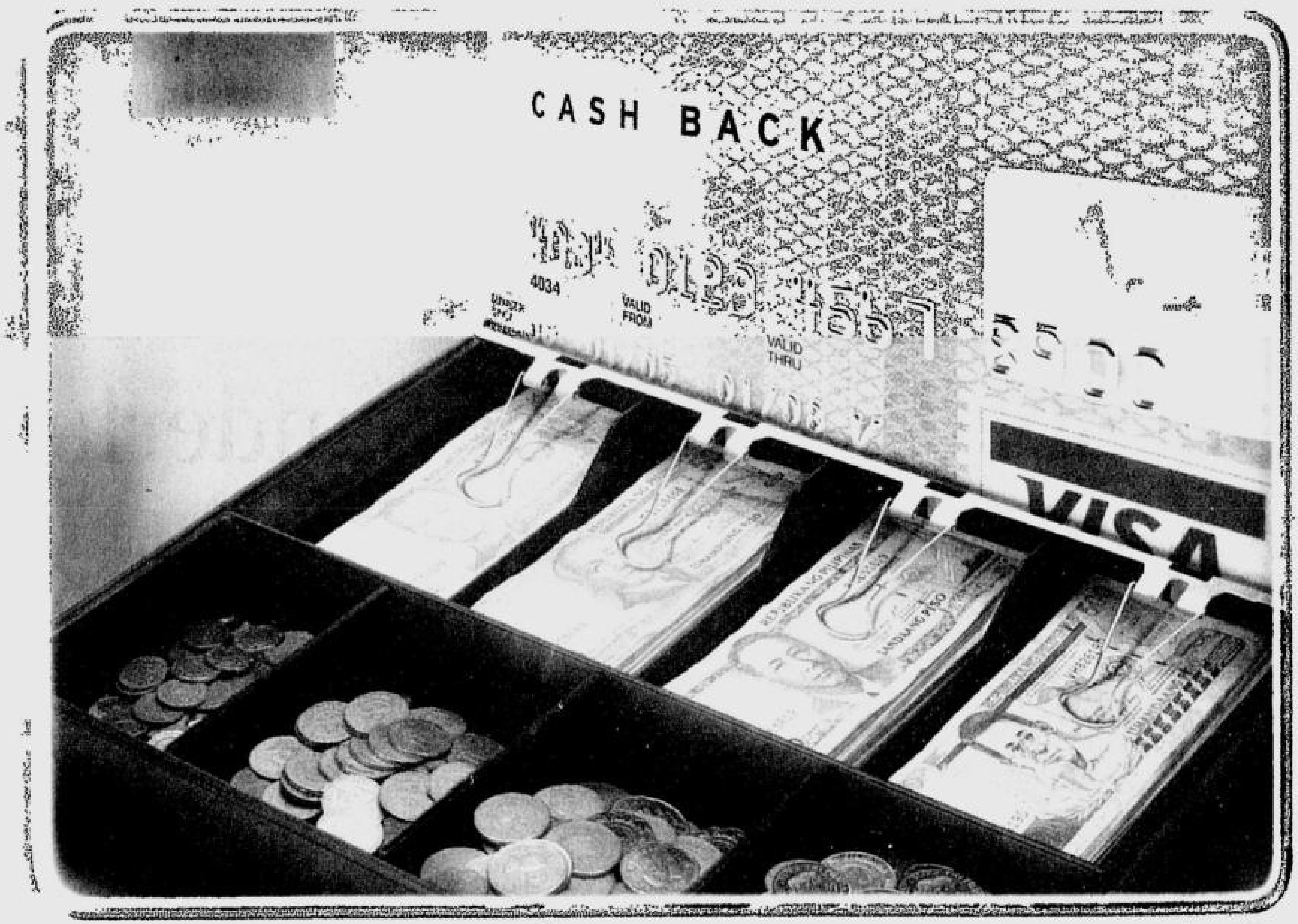
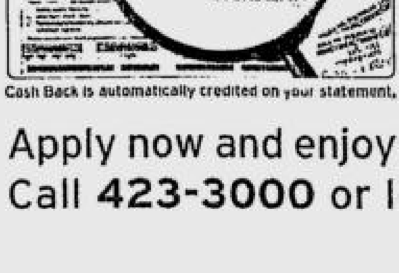


The New Citibank Cash Back Card



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Editor Louie C. Camino
Assistant Editor Emmie G. Velarde
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Glimmer, glimmer former stars in one night of nostalgia and Liberty

By Leah C. Salterio
Contributor

LAST Thursday night, former Sampaguita stars had dinner and nostalgia in a gathering hosted by Liberty Ilagan, herself a former Sampaguita actress in the '60s. It was a long night of bonding for the former stars, who had their share of fame and fans and who had not seen each other for many long years.

The dinner, held at Liberty's Ihaw-Ihaw, Kalde-Kaldero Atbp. Restaurant on Makati Avenue in Makati City, was also a welcome party for couple Romano "Billy" Castelvi and Jean Lopez, who are visiting Manila from Ontario, Canada, where they have been based for more than 30 years now with their two daughters, and for San Francisco-based entertainment columnist, impresario and beauty queen-maker Ferdie Villar.

Romano and Jean were Liberty's batch mates in Sampaguita Pictures, while Ferdie is "a very close and long-time friend," according to Liberty.

"I have not lost touch with Billy and Jean, even when they are based in Canada," said Liberty, called "Libay" by her close friends. "Every time they come to Manila, we always get together. I always see Ferdie whenever I go to San Francisco."

Last weekend, Liberty took Romano and Jean on a four-day trip to Marinduque, where Liberty owns a beach house. The couple from Canada, who arrived in Manila on Jan. 8, will fly back to Canada on Feb. 8.

Feast of specialties

The restaurant where the party was held is known for its singing cooks and waiters. Liberty owns the restaurant, which shares the building with the famous Barrio Fiesta, the restaurant chain built by her former husband, Rod Ongpauco. Both dining places which Liberty recently renovated are managed by Liberty and Rod's youngest daughter, Soeng.

The former stars and their guests that night feasted on Ihaw-Ihaw's specialties like *pinakbet, bakang maanghang* and *lapu-lapu* with garlic sauce, and Barrio Fiesta classics *kare-kare* and crispy *pata*.

"When I was in a restaurant in Langkawi, Malaysia, I ate *lapu-lapu* with garlic sauce and it was so good I decided to adopt its recipe for Ihaw-Ihaw," Liberty said with pride. "You cannot find this dish in the other branches, only here in Makati Avenue. That is one of our bestsellers."

Helping Liberty entertain her guests that night was her lawyer hubby, Carlito Lardizabal, whom she described as her first love. Liberty and Carlito got married five years ago in a "Titanic-inspired" wedding on board a yacht in Lake Tahoe, Nevada.

Seated at one long table with Carlito were Billy and Jean, Barbara Perez and Robert Arevalo, Amparo Lucas and Amalia Fuentes, who was joined by her husband Joey Stevens later that evening.

Liberty shared another table with former actress Anna Ledesma, actor and former Quezon City congressman Dennis Roldan, Manila Bulletin entertainment editor Crispina Belen and her husband Nards Belen, and Central Bank executive Mila Belisario, who came with her daughter Mitch.

FOR THE GOOD TIMES. (From left, standing) Barbara Perez, Ferdie Villar, Liberty Ilagan, Amparo Lucas; (seated) Carlitos Lardizabal, Ginger Ann Conejero, Robert Arevalo

Movie-star looks

The long years away from the limelight have given the former stars extra pounds, but their good looks have not faded. Liberty herself still looks every inch a movie star.

Liberty joined show business much against the will of her father, the late National Artist for Film Gerry de Leon.

Amalia, once tagged as the "Elizabeth Taylor of the Philippines" and known as "Nena" to family and close friends, still has a strong star presence despite the many excess pounds.

Jean has remained beautiful after all these years and Billy's looks are reminiscent of his matinee idol years, despite the hair loss.

All of them have survived stardom and have been able to live quiet and happy lives away from the cameras and the glare of klieg lights.

CARLITOS and Liberty, the gracious party hosts

FERDIE Villar takes a snapshot of Liberty and Mitch Belisario

ROMANO "Billy" Castelvi and Jean Lopez

Mediterranean cruise

"Jean was among my contemporaries in Sampaguita Pictures, with Josephine Estrada," Liberty recalled. "We were launched with Eddie Gutierrez, Lito Legaspi and Jose Mari, after the batch of Amalia, Barbara, Susan [Roces] and Daisy [Romualdez]. After our batch, the 'Stars of '66' were launched and they included Rosemarie Sonora, Gina Pareño, Blanca Gomez and [the late] Loretta Marquez."

Liberty made her movie debut opposite Jose Mari in "Lover Boy," which also starred Susan and Romeo Vasquez.

Last November, Liberty and Carlito and Amalia and her son Jerry went on a Mediterranean cruise.

"We went to Barcelona in Spain, Livorno, Pisa, Naples and Pompei in Italy and the Cote d'Azur, Nice and Marseilles in France," Liberty said. "After the seven-day cruise, my husband and I had an extended countryside vacation in Branbridge, England."

Discovery of Liberty

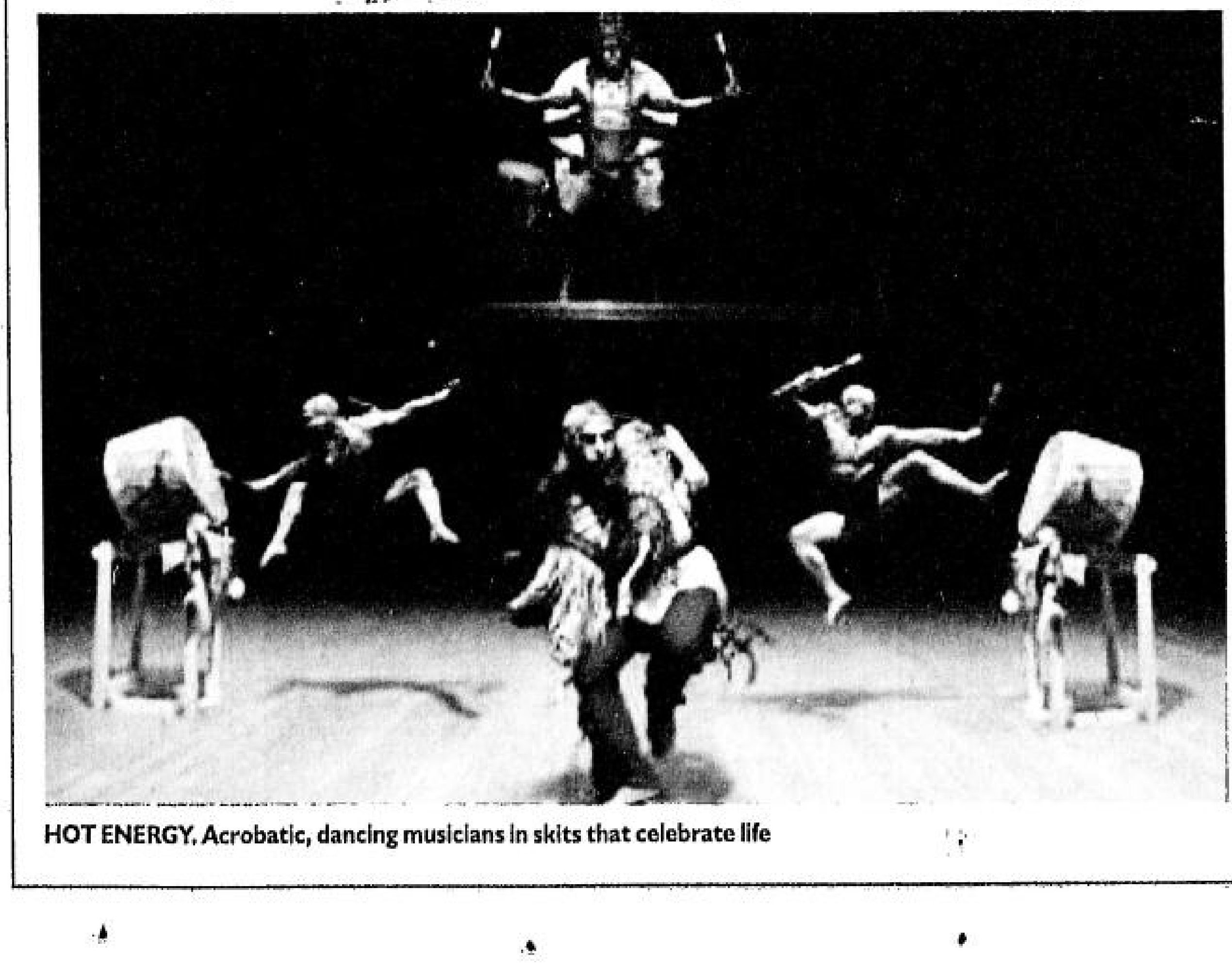
Liberty said she was still playing *piko* at 13 when she met Carlito, who is eight years her senior. But they finally ended up together only five years ago, when they tied the knot in Nevada.

Liberty was discovered by Sampaguita patriarch Dr. Jose Vera Perez when she was 15. She used her father's middle name and became known in the movies as Liberty Ilagan. She is the granddaughter of Hermogenes Ilagan, who was a stage director, writer and head of a zarzuela company.

Unfortunately, Liberty and her father did not have a chance to make a film together. De Leon directed such classics as "Sawa sa Lumang Simboryo," "Sanda Wong," "The Moises Padilla Story" and "Daigdig ng mga Api," among others. The last film starred Barbara Perez and Robert Arevalo.

When the former stars can find time to get together, they easily gather a large group to catch up or reminisce about their glorious years in the movies. Recently, they also got together for "Balik Samahan," a forum for veteran stars organized by Pempe Oreta.

Even when most of them are no longer active in show business, they still create a stir and attract attention whatever they do. Unlike old soldiers, stars don't really fade away. They just keep on glimmering.



HOT ENERGY. Acrobatic, dancing musicians in skits that celebrate life

10 nights of 'tribal rock 'n' roll' in Fire Dance Cirque at Araneta

SHOW TIME

LONG after Valentine's Day, the nights will continue to heat up as the Fire Dance Cirque performs at the Araneta Coliseum from Feb. 22-27.

Presented by Smart, the Fire Dance Cirque is live entertainment that uses acrobatic, dancing musicians to create new, non-traditional ceremonial dances that celebrate life through the beat of the drum. It's a novel concept based on Native American themes and educates the public on the history, present and future of Native American heritage via contemporary theater.

According to the show's spokesperson, "We, the musicians, take our ancestral heritage and apply it to what we feel makes what we are as people of the modern world. We could be considered a tribal rock 'n' roll band."

Utilizing completely original music, stage and media design, the Fire Dance is intended to arouse the senses and to be a high-energy performance.

The Fire Dance features entirely original music and choreography featuring dancers and acrobats as musicians. The performers create percussive sounds through the movements of the dance itself and through instruments masked within the set and costumes.

The show will have elaborate multimedia screen projections, with live music and acrobatic accompaniment.

Acclaimed throughout its major runs in different parts of the globe, the Fire Dance Cirque offers Filipino families an original mix of music and theater that will appeal to all age groups. The fun and upbeat mix of percussion, acrobatics, dance and multimedia performance will definitely dazzle audiences.

Produced by ALV Events International, the Fire Dance Cirque will consist of 10 from Feb. 22 to 27.

Tickets are available at all TicketNet outlets, 911-5555, or at ALV Events International, 633-98-25 to 27.

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7 RAISE YOUR VOICE
8 UNO
9 OCEAN'S TWELVE
10 BLADE TRINITY
11 ENTENG KABISOTE
12 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN

sm city fairview
1 SIGAW
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 MANO PO 3
4 RAISE YOUR VOICE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 MEET THE FOCKERS
7 UNO
8 WHITE NOISE
9 KUNG FU HUSTLE
10 NATIONAL TREASURE
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city manila
1 MEET THE FOCKERS
2 WHITE NOISE
3 NATIONAL TREASURE
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 RAISE YOUR VOICE
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 UNO
8 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
9 BLADE TRINITY
10 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
11 ENTENG KABISOTE
12 MAD HOUSE

sm city sta. mesa
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 UNO
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
6 MAD HOUSE
7 KUNG FU HUSTLE
8 NATIONAL TREASURE
9 WHITE NOISE
10 RAISE YOUR VOICE

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1 WHITE NOISE
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
6 RAISE YOUR VOICE
7 UNO
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city north edsa
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MAD HOUSE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 SALSA
6 UNO
7 MEET THE FOCKERS
8 WHITE NOISE

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1 MEET THE FOCKERS
2 UNO
3 WHITE NOISE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm supercenter sucat
1 UNO
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 WHITE NOISE

sm city bicutan
1 MEET THE FOCKERS
2 UNO
3 WHITE NOISE
4 BLADE TRINITY

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Meet the Fockers
MTRCB Rating: PG13

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SHOW TIME

Animated Bean on Disney Channel

"MR. BEAN—The Animated Series" is now on Disney Channel, Mondays to Fridays.

The series is based on, and remains faithful to, the original live-action "Mr. Bean," starring Rowan Atkinson.

Airings are at 9 a.m., 2:30 p.m., and 6:30 p.m.

Disney Channel has a special and exciting menu of original programs for the entire family. This includes famous animated movies, specials, sitcoms, family dramas and live action movies and adventure series. Disney Channel Asia, established in 1996, is available in Brunei, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

MEGA WOMEN
Two from show business, Angel Locsin and Toni Gonzaga, are on the list of Mega magazines' 10 Women to Watch in 2005. Angel stood out in the hit TV teen series "Click." Now she's the lead in GMA's successful fantaserye "Mulawin," opposite Richard Gutierrez. She starred in the Metro Manila Film Festival Best Picture, "Mano Po 3," and endorses Smart Buddy Girl Txt, Petite Monde, Happy Toothpaste and Head & Shoulders Shampoo. Toni, who was in the Sprite commercial and is a host on "Wazzup Wazzup," fascinates TV viewers with her talent, charisma and fun-loving personality. Also on the Mega list are Gloria Diaz's niece Georgina Wilson, accessories designer Amina Aranaz, Ben Chan's daughter Suyen Lim, artist Patty Eustaquio, Wawi Navarozza of the band The Late Isabel, ballet dancer Faye Abigail Tan, designer Yvonne Quisumbing and race car driver Pia Boren—all in the latest issue of Mega Magazine.

After raising funds, Gary V gets ready for Valentine show with Zsa Zsa

THE MUSIC Museum was overcome by one big wave of hope as show biz personalities gathered on Jan. 7 to help raise funds for victims of the flooding in Quezon province and the recent tsunami that struck several parts of Asia.

The concert featured Gary Valenciano, who sang inspirational songs, including "Love is the Answer," "Love in Any Language" and "People Need the Lord." Gary was joined by his children Paolo, Gabriel and Kiana, and special guest Kyla, with whom he sang a moving duet of "Sana Maulit Muli."

At the end, Gary was called back for an encore of two of his hits, "How Did You Know" and "Shout for Joy."

GARY V

All of the guest performers—including Gary himself—donated their services in support of the project, which raised more than the targeted amount of P1 million for Unicef.

Actress Cherie Gil, who survived the tsunami in Thailand, shared her personal testimony. Cherie and her husband, international violinist Roni Rogoff, who was in the audience that night, were vacationing in Phuket with children Rafael and Bianca when the tsunami hit.

According to Cherie's account, just 10 more minutes and their story would have had a different ending.

Also present at the concert was Unicef country representative for the Philippines Nick Alipui.

Globe Telecom presented "Wave of Hope" in cooperation with Goldilocks, Music Museum, Rustan's Essenses, Krocodile Grill, Aquasoft, Kitchen, Café Breton, GV Productions Inc., Manna Entertainment, Videosonic, Soundcheck and San Miguel Corp.

Gary starts preparing for his Valentine show, "Faces of Love" with Zsa Zsa Padilla, on Feb. 14 and 15 at Le Pavillon on Roxas Boulevard. The last time Gary and Zsa Zsa did a Valentine show together was in 1996 in "Once More."

Tickets to "Faces of Love" are P3,500 (with cocktails) and P2,500 (show only) and are available at Genesis, 725-1937, Ticketworld, 891-5610,

AFTER/3

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4 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE - PG13 BLADE TRINITY - R13

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(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 (SDDS) RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) RESERVE
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 UNO
2 PAKAWALANG PUSO

Lianas Cinema
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1 (SDDS) UNO
2 PAKAWALANG PUSO
3 FLESH TOWN
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1 (DDS) WHITE NOISE
2 (SDDS) ALAMO
3 (DTS) MEET THE FOCKERS
4 GOLD (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
6 GOLD (SDDS) KUNG FU HUSTLE
7 GOLD (DOLBY) MEET THE FOCKERS
8 MANO PO - 3
9 MAD HOUSE
10 NED KELLY

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2 (DOLBY) MEET THE FOCKERS
3 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE

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2 (SDDS) WHITE NOISE
3 (DTS) BLADE: TRINITY
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5 (Dolby) KUNG FU HUSTLE

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5 WHITE NOISE

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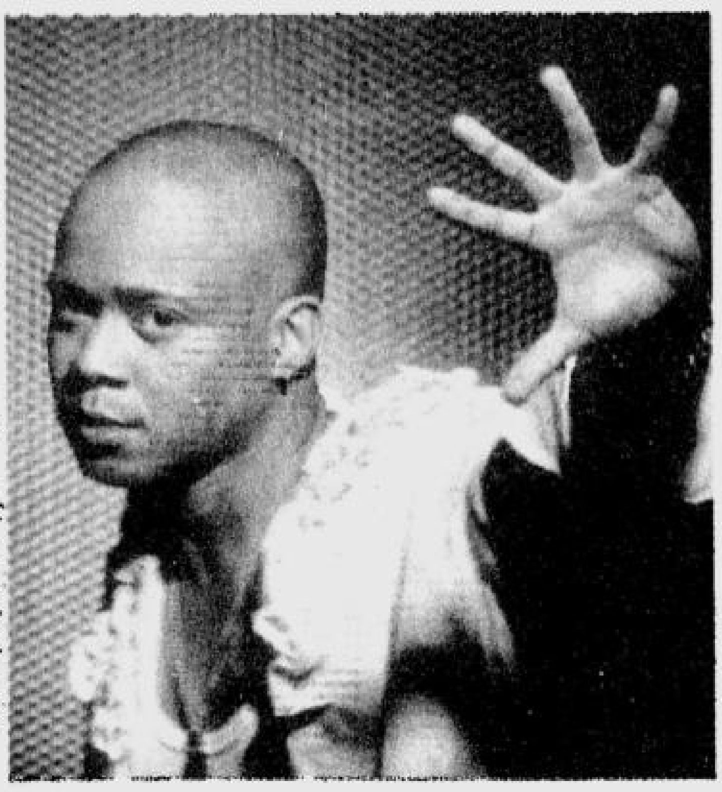
2 MAD HOUSE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 UNO
5 (DOLBY) BLADE 3
6 WHITE NOISE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SHOW TIME

LOOK AT LUKE NOW

Luke Mejares is a two-time nominee in the Hip Hop Awards which will be given out on Feb. 18 at the NBC Tent—for Best Male R&B Artist and Best R&B Video for "Paano Na?", from the album recently repackaged by BMG Records Pilipinas. The repackaged version now includes "214," originally performed by Bamboo with Rivermaya, and "Who's Holdin' Donna Now," an El Debarge original. The album also contains "Closure to my Heart," written for Luke by fellow R&B artist Keith Martin (of "Because of You" fame) after Keith heard the story of how Luke tracked down his American father all the way to the US, only to be rejected by him. Luke performs in a show in Pampanga on Jan. 29; and in Alabang on Feb. 13 at 7 p.m. Maristel Sampedro of Starwings Talents and Events Management manages Luke. Call (632)9370-767 or (0917)8978-357.



CHERIE Gil recalling her tsunami experience

After raising funds, Gary V…

From page 2

and Ticketnet, 911-5555.

The "Faces of Love" script is by Freddie Santos, with Mon Faustino as musical director.

"Faces of Love" is a production of Manila Genesis Entertainment & Management Inc., GV Productions Inc. and Manna Entertainment for the benefit of Shining Light Foundation.

POWER PLANT
CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

KUNG FU HUSTLE PG13 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15	MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 1140,2:05,4:30,6:55,9:20
BLADE TRINITY R13 12:50,3:10 MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 5:10,7:35,10:00	WHITE NOISE PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 1:00,3:25,5:50,8:15,10:40

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3 Uno 4 The Fockers 5 White Noise	1 Katawan Mo Langit Ko 2 Mad House 3 Kung Fu Hustle 4 Uno 5 Blade 3 6 White Noise	1 Spirit of the Glass 2 Along Came Polly

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WHITE NOISE
1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05
MADHOUSE
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
OCEAN'S TWELVE
1:30 4:10 6:50 9:30
KUNG FU HUSTLE
12:10 2:35 4:55 7:15 9:35
BLADE : TRINITY
12:05 2:25 4:45 7:05 9:25

ALI MALL CINEMAS

1	Dolby	MEET THE FOCKERS 1:05 3:25 5:45 8:05
2	SDDS	WHITE NOISE 12:35 3:10 5:45 8:20
3	dts	BLADE: TRINITY 11:10 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:20
4	Dolby	UNO 1:10 3:35 6:00 8:25
5	Dolby	KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:40

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2	MEET THE FOCKERS 11:30, 2:10, 4:50 7:30, 10:10 PG-13
3	KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00 PG-13
4	WHITE NOISE 11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00 GP

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CINEMA 2	MEET THE FOCKERS 11:00, 1:45, 4:25, 7:05, 9:50 PG13

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2 MEET THE FOCKERS
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG - 13)
3 WHITE NOISE
FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM 7:35PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
12:40PM LMF 5:40PM (PG - 13)
BLADE TRINITY
10:20AM, 3:20PM, LMF 8:20PM (R-13)

PREMIERE THEATRE KUNG FU HUSTLE
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1 MEET THE FOCKERS • THX 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	6 BLADE TRINITY 11:50 2:20 4:50 7:20 9:50
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30	7 MAD HOUSE 10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
3 WHITE NOISE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	8 BATH HOUSE 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 RAISE YOUR VOICE 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00	10 NATIONAL TREASURE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 MEET THE FOCKERS	10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
2 MAD HOUSE 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50	5 BLADE TRINITY 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:10 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50	6 RESERVE
4 WHITE NOISE 10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45

METRO EAST 682-8193/99 • 682-8280

1 TWO BROTHERS 10:40 12:45 2:50 4:55 7:00 9:10	5 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:30 10:30
2 BLADE TRINITY 10:40 1:10 3:50 6:30 9:10	6 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:35 1:05 3:35 6:05 8:20 10:30
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
4 MAD HOUSE 10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00	8 WHITE NOISE 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 MEET THE FOCKERS 10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25	5 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25	6 WHITE NOISE 11:15 1:20 3:20 5:10 7:00 8:55
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE 12:00 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:30	7 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN 12:00 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:25
4 BLADE TRINITY 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25	8 NATIONAL TREASURE 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30

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PIONEER 687-5378

1 WHITE NOISE 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10	3 MEET THE FOCKERS 10:30 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30
2 BLADE TRINITY 11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:10	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50

Citisquare MALABON 288-0985 / 2575

1 HONEY 10:55 12:50 2:45 4:40 6:35 8:30	3 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:50 1:15 3:40 6:05 8:30
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	4 SUPERBABIES 11:20 1:10 3:00 4:50 6:40 8:30

CAINTA 240-4661

1 BLADE TRINITY 12:10 2:50 5:30 8:10	3 WHITE NOISE 10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 12:40 3:20 6:00 8:40	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55

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The good, the bad, the ugly

'AI 4' auditions include Braxton cousin, William Hung female version, cannibal

JILLIAN Bennett, one of the early casualties

MARY Roach, who would be Mary Guilbaux. But she bungled it.

GUEST judge Mark McGrath (second from left) with mainstays Jackson, Abdul and Cowell

SHOW STOPPER

IT'S A BIGGER, better, louder and crazier "American Idol," Season 4.

And more than 54 million people all over America watched the good, the bad and the ugly of the "Idol" audition, making it the biggest premiere of the season.

In the Philippines, "American Idol" is shown on ABC every Wednesday and Thursday at 10 p.m. ABC first brought to the Philippines the phenomenal talent search in 2004 with "AI" Season 3 where two Filipino Americans, Jasmine Trias and Camile Velasco, did the country proud and captured hearts worldwide.

For the premiere episode of "AI 4" which was shown in the Philippines last Wednesday, 21,000 auditioners turned half a million square feet of concrete at the Washington Convention Center in DC into a dorm as they slept over, dreaming to be the next Kelly Clarkson, Ruben Studdard and Fantasia Barrino.

As host Ryan Seacrest put it, "There are choices and sacrifices you make to follow your dream. It's one thing to have the voice, but it's another thing to have the heart."

The two-hour premiere featured the 25-year-old Anwar Robinson, a music teacher from Newark, New Jersey, who got the first unanimous vote from the four judges, which that night included Mark McGrath, vocalist of the pop group Sugar Ray. Anwar sang "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" by Stevie Wonder.

One of the judges said, "You just sang the melody, absolutely terrific."

Husband and daughter

Then there's drama, the heart-warming story of Regina Brooks who sold her wedding ring for $200—it was a choice between her wedding ring and her karaoke machine—just so she could go to the audition.

After Brooks sang Johnny Mathis' "Misty," Simon told her to bring her husband. He came, their 4-year-old daughter astride his hips. He vowed full support for his wife, melting the hearts of of judges Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul.

Judge Simon Cowell said no, but, what the heck, he was outvoted anyway.

Another good audition story was the pretty 20-year-old single mom Marlea Stroman, who said that Fantasia was a big inspiration for her last year. Stroman sang "All At Once" by Bonnie Raitt.

Jackson loved her and said she was amazing. McGrath loved her as well, and said she had a great upper register. Abdul and Cowell also loved her, too.

Simon did comment, however, that she looked dead while she was performing but he liked her nevertheless.

On to Hollywood

Another favorite was 20-year-old Sarah Mather, whose parents are British, which of course excites Cowell. Mather sang "Rescue Me" by Aretha Franklin.

Mather got good comments from the judges, the only negative comment being about her movements throughout the audition. She also received a unanimous vote, so Hollywood, here she comes!

The next auditioner, Constantine Maroulis, was preceded by a short clip on some of the voting controversies—Tamyra from Season 1, Clay and Ruben from Season 2, and the three divas being in the bottom three last year.

There was a video of Maroulis jamming with his rock band in New York. He sang Aerosmith's "Cryin'." Cowell hated it but the other three thought it was good, and so Maroulis, too, will be moving on to Hollywood.

Of course, "AI" will never be complete without the bad and the ugly. We also met the cousin of Toni Braxton, Derek Braxton, who described himself as "fabulous and sexy." He sang "Unbreak My Heart" and "How Could an Angel Break My Heart," both by Toni. His voice was very shaky and weird and the judges told him so.

"Your voice is probably the weirdest voice I've ever heard in this competition," said Cowell.

Earth-shaking

They say, save the best for last. Well, this time "AI" saved the worst for last.

Mary Roach was the final contestant of the night. She told the judges that if she made it to Hollywood, she would be changing her name to Mary Guilbaux because it had more star quality in it. She did an earth-shaking version of Carol King's "I Feel the Earth Move."

Remember William Hung? Roach's performance was basically the female equivalent of him, complete with weird voices and even weirder choreography.

Cowell told her she was one of the worst he's ever heard. Thanks for wrapping up the show, Mary.

On to St. Louis, Missouri, the second leg of the audition, where 12,000 showed up with their dream to be the next American Idol.

We saw the Maynard Triplets, a trio of blondes in pink of whom Cowell said: "You're all overweight, you're three overweight Jessica Simpsons."

"We're curvaceous, not fat," one of the girls shot back. But they still got the thumbs-down.

Panic room

A walk on the odd side was Katrina Rece who admitted to have eaten a bit of human flesh and claimed it tasted like bacon, has a panic room in her house, and works at a call center where she talks mostly to mental patients.

Cowell neatly summed her up: "You're a cannibal, you live in a panic room and you talk to mental patients all day."

He said he would like to introduce Rece to the triplets, as her human flesh-eating ability would come in handy with the three overweight Jessica Simpsons.

Another thumbs-down.

Not all comments were a letdown, though. There was a liberal dose of good advise as well. "Confidence should be backed up by talent." "When you're comfortable with your talent, you don't need the gimmick." "Work on your emotion and stage presence." "You need to be able to stand out in the crowd to make it in the business. Make sure you have the necessary schtick."

Third stop, New Orleans with rock star Gene Simmons as guest judge.

All those dreaming of becoming the next Philippine Idol, watch the definitive talent search, "American Idol," and learn. There's a lot to be learned here on how to make it and become an idol.

'Da Vinci Code,' starring Hanks and Tautou, to shoot in Louvre

TAUTOU

PARIS—France will allow US film director Ron Howard to shoot scenes in the famed Louvre museum for a film adaptation of the worldwide bestseller "The Da Vinci Code."

The movie version of Dan Brown's thriller will feature Tom Hanks as professor Robert Langdon and is scheduled to start shooting in May, according to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) website.

French actress Audrey Tautou, star of the hugely popular "Amelie," has been chosen to play the female lead, the daily Le Parisien reported.

Tautou will play Sophie Neveu, the young French woman assisting professor Robert Langdon in his investigation.

The detective Bezu Fache will be played by Jean Reno, the paper said.

Asked about plans to shoot in the Louvre in summer, a spokesperson for the culture ministry said: "Yes, it is scheduled to go ahead. There is no problem."

"The Da Vinci Code," a murder-mystery set in the art world, has sold 17 million copies worldwide and spawned a thriving side industry in books debunking its controversial theories on religion and art.

Tour guides offer visits of Paris exploring the book's locations and the theories surrounding the work of Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci, whose most famous painting, the Mona Lisa, hangs in the Louvre.

A film production team has already visited the museum to select locations in its Grand Gallery, where the opening of the novel is set, and in the Mona Lisa room which is temporarily closed for restoration, Louvre director Henri Loyrette said. "We have agreed in principle," he said. "There is really a very strong desire to see the film adaptation of this book, which is world famous, shot at the Louvre."

France wants to attract film crews to its monuments and museums to boost tourism and provide jobs for thousands of local show business workers, who staged protests at the Cannes film festival last year over cuts to their welfare benefits.

The Louvre last allowed filming in its miles of galleries in 1999 for "Belphegor," a classic French mystery tale of a ghost who haunts the Louvre and steals precious artifacts.

Filming usually takes place at night and on Tuesdays, when the museum is closed to the public.

"The Da Vinci Code," which the IMDb said is scheduled for release in 2006, is not the first movie directed by Howard with Hanks in the lead. They also teamed up for the 1995 film hit "Apollo 13."

The new movie will be produced by Columbia/Sony Pictures with a budget of around $100 million.

Le Parisien said other French actresses considered for the role of Sophie Neveu included Vanessa Paradis, Sandrine Bonnaire, Judith Godreche, Sophie Marceau, Juliette Binoche and Linda Hardy.

Reuters, AFP

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Bloom signs up to present Oscar

LOS ANGELES— "Lord of the Rings" star Orlando Bloom will present an Academy Award at next month's ceremony, organizers of cinema's top awards announced Friday.

The 28-year-old British actor is the third star to sign up to present Oscar statuettes, following last year's Best Actress winner, Charlize Theron, and Renee Zellweger.

Bloom starred as the elf Legolas in Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning "Lord of the Rings" film trilogy, whose latest installment swept the 2004 Oscars.

He is about to start production on a sequel to the hit movie "Pirates of the Caribbean," and he will be seen next in "Kingdom of Heaven" by Ridley Scott and "Elizabethtown" by filmmaker Cameron Crowe who directed "Almost Famous."

Nominations for this year's Academy Awards will be announced before dawn on Tuesday in Beverly Hills, and the glittering awards ceremony will be held in Hollywood's Kodak Theater a month later.

AFP